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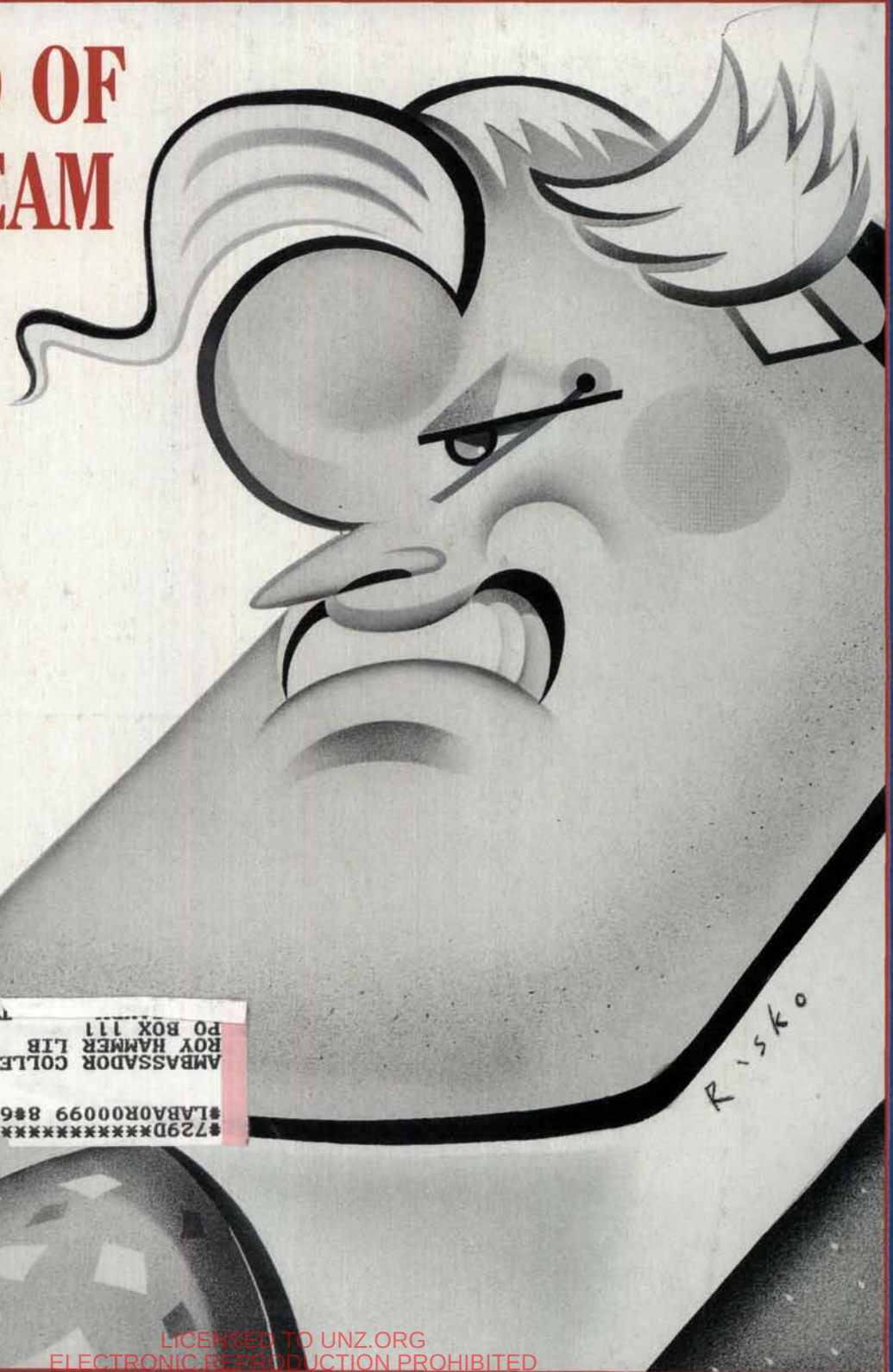
THE END OF THE DREAM

by James Carroll



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FROM WASHINGTON

Hortonism redux

On "Meet the Press" June 2, House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt was denying that the Democratic civil rights bill is a "quota bill," as President Bush has charged. NBC's Tim Russert pressed him: if you're a small business owner, "the obligation is on you to prove that you're not discriminating." This is the rap on the civil rights bill: that it requires employers to justify employment standards that have a "disparate impact" on minorities and women, and that employers will simply practice reverse discrimination to avoid the hassle.

Not one television or newspaper discussion in twenty on the "quotas" controversy has troubled to point out that Bush's alternative bill would *also* shift the burden of proof to employers. The only difference on this key point is over what the employer is required to prove: a "significant and manifest relationship to . . . job performance" (Democrats) versus "serves in a significant way . . . legitimate employment goals" (Bush). Yet Bush has managed to paint this as the difference between vile quotas and noble civil rights.

Two years ago, when the Supreme Court produced the ruling (putting the burden of proof on the complaining employee) that both bills would overturn, conservatives celebrated a victory over reverse discrimination. Yet not one Republican or conservative that I'm aware of has attacked *Bush's* bill for promoting quotas. They're enjoying the partisan advantage too much to muddy the waters.

On another noisy difference between the two versions—punitive damages—the Republicans may even be right that the Democratic version's generosity will encourage too much litigation. But Republican sincerity is suspect here since, on a different matter, their version would permit endless re-litigation of civil rights court decrees, which the Democrats would not. More important, this punitive damages fuss has nothing even arguably to do with quotas, since the disputed provision only applies to cases of purposeful discrimination proved in court, not to statistical disparities. There can't be two citizens in a thousand among those exposed to all the "quota" rhetoric who are aware of this point.

The Republican marketing of the quota issue has been brilliant and despicable. It is Willie Hortonism redux. Not that anyone who prefers one version of a civil rights act to another is necessarily racist. But Hortonism isn't racism. Hortonism is the cynical concoction of a divisive issue in the political laboratory for narrow electoral advantage. Hortonism has certain familiar features.

First, it is inflammatory but essentially beside the point. Prison furloughs? The Pledge of Allegiance? It's absolutely true, as conservatives (and this magazine) keep noting, that fiddling with job discrimination law won't solve the real problems of family, education, crime, drugs that ail black America. But the proponents of this mild palliative are not the ones who have made it Topic A on the political agenda. The law would have been enacted without fuss last year if someone hadn't vetoed it with a huge flourish. It is Bush and company who are out to convince Americans that discrimination in favor of blacks and women is our leading social malady.

A second feature of Hortonism is that complicating details can be counted on to melt away. The press cannot annotate every reference to "Dukakis's furlough program for murderers" with the information that it was initiated by his Republican predecessor and forty-two other states had one too. Nor can reporters explain every time Bush uses the term "quota bill" that the dynamics of his bill and the Democrats' regarding statistical disparities are almost exactly the same.

Third, comfort is available for sophisticates who might otherwise be bothered by the trivia and demagoguery. The narrow controversy is held to be symbolic of larger issues: crime, patriotism, fair play. And there are factual return volleys, turning on the difference between furloughs for murderers sentenced to life with parole and furloughs for murderers sentenced to life without parole; or the different legal implications of the word "significant" and the word "manifest." The lie is that these distinctions are what the issue is really about, or that they even begin to justify the symbolic weight they're given.

Hortonism above all means creating a bogey, a Great Other—criminals, liberals, the ACLU, Harvard Yard elitists, "Beltway interest groups"—a "them" on the other side of some great divide from "us." For a politician like George Bush, this serves two purposes. First, it masks some problematic reality: that he is a Yale aristocrat, that he actually has no interest in challenging 95 percent of what postwar liberalism achieved without his help, that the difference between his civil rights bill and the one he disparages is infinitesimal. Second, it plays on the insecurities many people feel these days about their jobs, their families, their middle-class prosperity, while distracting them from asking who's been running the country since 1980.

The Wall Street Journal, which has been yelling "quota" as loud as anyone, ran an astonishing editorial a few days ago magisterially titled "Time for Reflection." It declared that special treatment for minorities "is by now an embedded part of national life," and even bestowed its approval: "Nearly everyone gets ahead in part through personal connections, and affirmative action gives blacks some connections." The question, said the *Journal*, "is *how much* racial preference for minorities. Do we need . . . to push ourselves harder? Do we have it about right? Or [would] backing off a bit . . . better serve the long-run interest of racial justice?"

Oh my, how reasonable. How judicious. It's just a matter of dial-twiddling, is it? I would have been more impressed if the *Journal* had apologized for all the times it has asserted that some absolute principle was at stake, or if it had criticized those who still carry on in that manner. And I can't help reflecting what a wonderful coincidence it is that the dials of racial favoritism have now been turned almost exactly the right amount, especially since *The Wall Street Journal* opposed every past upward adjustment.

But the most striking thing about the *Journal*'s experiment in honesty is how hopeless it makes the whole business as a political issue. "Slightly less racial favoritism: Re-elect Bush in '92"? It just doesn't work. On this one, it's Hortonism or nothing.

You might ask: If the differences between the two version are really so small, why don't the Democrats support Bush's civil rights bill and be done? Answer: Bush has made that impossible. The Democratic bill is already a compromise, which the White House not only rejected but took it upon itself to talk the business community out of accepting. Bush is hoping to win the laurel of a civil rights bill, the laurel of saving the nation from "quotas," and the laurel of outmaneuvering the opposition. Expecting the Democrats to give him all that is expecting too much—even from the folks who allowed him to escape his own budget trap while blaming a tax increase on them. At least I hope it's expecting too much.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

School haze

To the editors:

Abigail Thernstrom's proposal to implement the "old-fashioned virtues" utilized in parochial schools in inner-city public schools ("Out-Classed," May 13) underestimates the scope and entrenchment of liberal education ideology in public education. At the "model" inner-city school where I work, teachers are coerced into keeping the combined total of Ds and Fs to less than 20 percent (students who receive Fs are rarely flunked anyway), and are instructed to teach "at grade level" to students whose abilities are far below grade level. This is done to foster "self-esteem," avoid "racial stereotyping," maintain "high expectations," and offer "equal access" to "higher order thinking." Students who threaten and insult teachers are said to be displaying their "sophistication" and are placed in "at risk" programs instead of being suspended. Teachers who receive the "training" to counsel these students, at a great cost to taxpayers, spend two days learning the "body languages" of various ethnic groups, hearing the confessions of a reformed alcoholic while learning about the AA program, and discovering how students live up to a "teacher's expectations."

Ms. Thernstrom's dreamy hope of transplanting the parochial school "model" into public schools (hence her fatuous claim that parochial schools in the inner city are not more successful simply because they enjoy a better clientele) ignores the various special interests served by the current education establishment and thus only serves to detract from the unpleasant work of questioning these special interests.

RONEN NISSIMOV
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:

Abigail Thernstrom refers to a RAND study of a program (S/SP) through which low-income students are able to attend Catholic schools in New York City. Although Ms. Thernstrom's summary of the report's conclusions is not inaccurate, she might have supported her argument even further by describing the structural features that RAND found to be common to the Catholic and special-purpose schools we examined. The most important of these is a sense of focus, which is determined by the needs and interests of those who constitute the school community (rather than the diffuse missions typical of institutions accountable to numerous external funders and regulators), and sufficient organizational strength to give the school the flexibility and resources necessary to pursue its mission.

As co-author of the RAND study, I agree with Ms. Thernstrom that there is much to be learned from the "old-fangled" strategies of Catholic schools. But there is also much to be learned from the innovation that one finds in schools such as Deborah Meier's Central Park East, which makes use of the principles of Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Murray Bergtraum High School for Business Careers, where students spend part of each week working in offices inside or outside of the school. Students at Bergtraum and CPE feel that they are members of communities committed to learning and teaching, and these schools are effective in reaching their goals without instituting a "stripped-down, meat-and-potatoes curriculum" or relying primarily on the lecture method of instruction that is prevalent in Catholic schools.

Ms. Thernstrom recognizes this possibility when she writes that "reshaping urban public schools to resemble those the archdiocese runs . . . won't work for all kids." But I would contend something stronger: although there is much to be learned from Catholic schools, not all of it is positive.

TAMAR GENDLER
Cambridge, Massachusetts

A cult above

To the editors:

The Kent May 4 Center, a non-profit, educational organization that opposes excessive force and promotes nonviolent student activism, was demeaned by Francis Wilkinson in "Trigger Happy" (May 13). Mr. Wilkinson referred to the center and our supporters as "a kind of cult, directed by a guru." Our educational work, widely praised elsewhere, is similar to the work of other victims who seek to promote positive change.

Our major efforts to help promote new student activism were entirely ignored by Mr. Wilkinson in an attempt to reduce our work to the status of morbid nostalgia. We seek to reveal the cover-up of murder, prevent future massacres, and contribute to the inevitable realization of a new and powerful American student movement. Our work should be viewed as a serious effort with growing success. Otherwise, cynical writers and national publications will simply ignore us.

ALAN CANFORA
Kent, Ohio
(Via 900 number)

The writer is director of the Kent May 4 Center.

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Drunken jive

To the editors:

In "Blitzed" (April 22), Joshua Zimmerman leads us on a zigzag ride through several topics with manufactured connections and inaccurate information. For instance, if the number of drunk driving deaths has been reduced by 12 percent in seven years, it is perfectly consistent that those groups concerned with the still remarkable toll of almost 18,000 persons killed would attempt to further the very efforts that Mr. Zimmerman acknowledges effective but decries. He fails to point out that a rise in drunk driving deaths had preceded 1982.

Mr. Zimmerman falls for the common mistake of measuring the dimension of the alcohol abuse problem by prevalence of use in a particular age cohort (e.g., 18- to 24-year-olds drinking beer). As with drug-use statistics, the important measure is the number using the mood-changer frequently (four or more times per week), not the number who have ever used it. One-third of all drinkers consume 95 percent of all alcoholic beverages. Studies show that group to be most resistant to public health or other initiatives to reduce consumption. That group is also most likely to contain drunk drivers. (By the way, per capita consumption of beer *increased* by 3.1 percent in 1990, according to the industry reports.)

Intervention is not treatment. It is an attempt to stop the manipulation of friends and family by any alcoholic. From studies at the Great Lakes Naval Station in the 1970s, the power of mandatory referrals was clearly demonstrated. The method, though popularized and labeled by Vernon Johnson, was in existence in other forms even before the advent of AA.

Mr. Zimmerman's central point—that across the country convicted drunk drivers are ordered to begin treatment, usually at an AA chapter—is false. The standard procedure for first offenders is to be referred to a class that runs about six weeks. If evaluated as an alcoholic in that

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JUNE 24, 1991

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,988

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 204, Number 25, Issue 3,988, June 24, 1991. (Printed in the U.S. on June 5, 1991.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 7 & 14, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1991) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1991 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 24, 1991

THE CYNICISM THING

The window that opened for George Bush after the Gulf war has rapidly closed. During this brief period, in which the public was particularly receptive to the president, he had a unique opportunity to propose a program to deal with the nation's domestic needs. Over the past month he has finally filled in the blank. But instead of advancing comprehensive policies, Mr. Bush has steadily reduced his message to ever narrower partisan positioning. His true program has been revealed. It is his re-election.

With his election in 1988, Mr. Bush's good intentions were conceded even by those who had been repelled by his relentlessly denigrative campaign. Now, as president, Mr. Bush would devote himself to the serious task of governing. His promise to be "kinder and gentler" was a way to distinguish himself not only from his predecessor but also from his campaign persona. During the now long forgotten, heated debate over his constitutional amendment to prohibit flag burning, a reporter asked him if this amendment wasn't simply the equivalent of his campaign visits to a flag factory—i.e., empty, demagogic cynicism. "Everything I did last year [1988]," the president explained, "was the purpose of advancing my—everything I did politically—advancing my election. And of course I'm not going to say that." Suddenly, even Mr. Bush himself seemed to agree that his campaign demagogy had been deplorable. "That's history," he remarked flippantly about all the issues that he had used to roil the voters. Willie Horton, the Pledge of Allegiance, the ACLU, the "L" word—none of that mattered anymore.

But the two periods of George Bush, far from representing a distinction between his campaigning and his presidency, are seamlessly connected. Mr. Bush's real problem is not just in formulating his aims (his famous trouble with "the vision thing") but in his slipperiness about what he does and what he says others do—the cynicism thing. Mr. Bush's cynical streak has run straight through his presidency, from the early touted (now rarely mentioned) war on drugs ("This scourge will end!"), which featured the seriocomic entrapment of a punk drug-dealer in front of the White House in order to provide the cocaine for a presidential prop in a television speech, to the sudden abrogation of his chief campaign pledge not to raise taxes ("Read my hips!"). In the invasion of Panama, the spoor of cynicism led back to Mr. Bush's approval when he was CIA director of clandestine payments to Manuel Noriega, to Vice President Bush's undermining of a deal to get the dictator to resign in exchange for dropping all indictments because it might taint Mr. Bush's presidential bid, and to the triggering of the invasion after intense criticism for the administration's botching of a coup attempt. In the aftermath, there was never an accounting of the civilian toll. And despite Noriega's imprisonment, Panama has regained its status as the principal drug transshipment point of the region. But Mr. Bush has seemed interested in Panama only when it impinged on him politically.

On the eve of the victory parades for the Gulf war, whose prelude and consequences provide a pair of cynical parentheses, Mr. Bush has set the tone with three speeches. Their cynicism falls into two categories—first, a very small, idiosyncratic list of things he truly cares about, such as the defense of the People's Republic of China; and second, things he doesn't really care about one way or another, such as everything else.

On May 4, at the University of Michigan, the president said: "We have rediscovered the power of the idea that toppled the Berlin Wall, and led a world to strike back at Saddam Hussein." But during the war he never cited freedom and democracy as the reasons for defending the Saudi and Kuwaiti kingdoms. Collective security was the rationalizing ideal; democracy is something we are not trying to foist on our Arab allies, one of them, Syria, responsible for malicious terrorism, including a hand in the bombing of Pan Am 103. The personal battle that Mr. Bush had created between himself and Saddam was now demoted. No

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longer did he mention bringing the Iraqi strongman before a war crimes tribunal: striking back in the past at Saddam, more entrenched in power than ever, was sufficient. Anything else might risk Mr. Bush's domestic popularity.

The president continued on domestic themes. "We must conquer the temptation to assign bad motives to people who disagree with us," he said—and then briskly proceeded to distort Lyndon Johnson's motives in creating the Great Society: "He believed that cadres of experts really could care for the millions." The Great Society was an attempt to "federalize virtue," which weakened "moral sensitivity," ultimately leading to "the notion that whatever is not illegal must be acceptable." Such a morally ruinous program, one would have thought, would call for repeal at the very least. Yet Mr. Bush failed to cite a single Great Society program he would eliminate—Medicare, say, or Head Start, or Foster Grandparents. His rhetoric has no substance; it is a cheap, inflated currency.

On May 27, at Yale, the president laid out a case study of "moral ambiguity," in which it was hard to tell "good guys and bad guys." "When these situations arise, identify your principles and stick by them." What he had in mind, he elaborated, was extending most-favored-nation trading privileges to Communist China. "It is wrong to isolate China if we hope to influence China," he said. This was the "moral" choice. But Mr. Bush's use of morality is highly selective. Saddam before Kuwait, for example, was not condemned for his brutality; on the contrary, the administration protected him from a threatened embargo. In the context of the Chinese tyranny's crushing of aspirations for democracy, Mr. Bush's policy is too solicitous to be described as realism. For the former ambassador to China, its leadership has become a sentimental cause that deserves any cynical defense. At a press conference the day after his Yale speech, the president called his approach "good foreign policy," and assailed those who have raised the human rights issue about China as practicing "the easy cop-out, the easy election-year politics."

On June 1, at West Point, the president claimed to make an "appeal to the better angels" of our nature. He praised affirmative action and attacked the civil rights bill as a "quota bill," though his own bill is virtually indistinguishable from it. Although his rhetoric seems to suggest a principled conservative position, his maneuverings suggest a coolly calculated decision to divide the country on the fault line of racial fear. Mr. Bush is also hypocritical here: his own staff and administration have an aggressive policy of affirmative action in their own hiring. They even acquiesce to quotas, and in certain cases promote them (see "Party Lines" by Linda Chavez, page 14). A case in point is recorded in an unjustly neglected passage of Bob Woodward's new book, *The Commanders*. Dick Cheney, on the day he was sworn in as secretary of defense, paid a visit to the White House chief of staff, John Sununu. Mr. Woodward writes: "Sununu—in public a strong opponent of racial and gender quotas—told Cheney the White House wanted 30 percent of the remaining top forty-two jobs in the Defense Department to be filled by women or minorities."

In exploiting the furor over symbolic racial politics, Mr. Bush has helped to obscure the structural problem of the underclass, which remains unaddressed by any initiative of his. But two days after his West Point speech, he felt moved to personalize the conflict, as in the Gulf war. His opponents, he charged, "wanted to grind me into the political dirt." Once again, he must "strike back." His sense of proportion has only a political measure.

It is often difficult to tell Mr. Bush's myopia from his cynicism. He betrayed the Kurds and the Shiites of Iraq by ending the war as swiftly as he could and calling it a victory. He signs a hate crimes bill protecting homosexuals and then continues a ban that keeps HIV-positive people from entering the country. He declares his opposition to abortion while privately moving to blur the Republican Party's position on the issue. He lambasts so-called tax-and-spend liberals, while signing a budget agreement that taxes more and leaves middle-class entitlements intact.

The labeling of Mr. Bush as pragmatic has been something of a misnomer. Pragmatism is a style of pursuing ends, not a substitute for having them. Pragmatism demands judgment by results, but the president wishes to be judged by the presumption of his opponents' bad faith—a projection and distraction. So far his method has been effective in sustaining the goal of popularity for its own sake. Mr. Bush gets away with it partly because of the intellectual and political flaccidity of the congressional Democratic leadership, which serves so conveniently as both foil and prop. The only way to counter cynicism is neither with more of it nor with craven acquiescence, but with the persistent defense of principle.

NOTEBOOK

LAST CALL: The poll two weeks ago showed a narrow majority (58 percent) thought the data on racial discrimination as reported in a recent Urban Institute study strengthened the case for the Democrats' Civil Rights Act now before Congress. . . . This week we've decided to change our 900 number service a little. You'll still be able to call in your comments and letters to the editor on our line (as several dozen of you did last week), but we'll be saving our poll for particularly controversial editorials and an occasional reader contest. To say farewell to the weekly poll, though, we invite you to call in for a simple endorsement—or denunciation—of the Bush administration's record to date. What are you waiting for? The number is 1-900-726-6671.

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JUNKET WATCH: John Sununu will have a handy retort for congressional critics of his travel habits if he gets his hands on a "Dear Colleague" letter circulated by Representatives John Edward Porter of Illinois and Bill Richardson of New Mexico. The letter offers a free air tour of the forests of the Pacific Northwest to assist members in making up their minds about "important legislation that will help to determine the fate of America's national forests." The tour is sponsored by Lighthawk, a company whose promotional brochure features endorsements by Senator Brock Adams of Washington and Representative Arthur Ravenel Jr. of South Carolina. "Members of Congress, journalists, teachers, citizen activists, and celebrities have found Lighthawk's tours to be educational, enjoyable, and powerfully moving," it points out. Not to mention free: "Lighthawk will furnish the costs from Washington, D.C., for members only and will include accommodations if desired."

WELFARE KING: Last month somebody who looked an awful lot like Newt Gingrich called a press conference to announce that he had secured an additional $1 million grant from the Department of Labor to continue its Youth Opportunities program in Atlanta. In announcing the grant, which follows a $2.7 million one he won last year, the Georgia representative—for indeed it was he—said, "This is a highly innovative program designed to help in the war on drugs and violent crime by targeting 25,000 of the most poverty-stricken individuals for special assistance." A few days later, Newt hastened to convene a seminar at the Longworth House Office Building. Its title: "Replacing the Welfare State: Steps Toward a New Paradigm."

MUTATIS MUTANDIS:

Pope offers qualified praise of capitalism

—*Chicago Tribune*, May 3

Pope assails capitalist evils

—*Chicago Sun-Times*, same day

Free market gets pope's blessing

—*The Washington Times*, same day

Pope warns against godless capitalism

—same paper, same day

GUNS FOR BUTTER: New York state legislators are willing to try almost anything to diminish the state's mammoth $8.5 billion budget deficit. The newest idea is to auction firearms, including assault weapons, confiscated by police. Proponents of the plan argue that the auction would raise $2 million. Assembly Speaker Mel Miller doesn't understand the objections of Governor Cuomo and the New York City police commissioner, who want to continue the policy of destroying the guns. "Why crush them if they're legal and sold to licensed people?" asks a spokesman for Mr. Miller. But why stop there? Why not rent the confiscated weapons to "licensed people" in exchange for a cut of the take in whatever activity they're used for? That would really raise some bucks.

I'LL SAY:

DLC convention reason for being unclear

—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 7

RIDDLE OF THE SPHINCTER: From this year's Yale commencement catalog list of doctoral theses: "The effects of dietary nutrients on the myoelectric activity of the opossum sphincter of Oddi." ●

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

UNCIVIL WAR

By Fred Barnes

In the late morning of June 3, John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, read a wire service account of a Capitol Hill press conference by the civil rights lobby. He rushed to tell the president, then handed him the hard copy. Bush read it. At the press conference, Democratic Representative John Lewis of Georgia characterized the president's speech at West Point two days earlier as "the most divisive and demagogic one that any president has made on civil rights in modern times. . . . If this speech is not a reminder of the days of Bull Connor and George Wallace, what is?" John Jacob of the National Urban League accused Bush of "trying to turn a civil rights issue into a political issue that plays on irrational fears and latent racism." The Rev. Joseph Lowry of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference said Bush was "more concerned about being kinder and gentler to the rich folks in Kuwait City than the poor folks in Kansas City."

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Bush, as an aide put it, got "steamed." He responded more in anger than in sorrow. In the text of a speech to the National Federation of Independent Business just after lunch that day, Bush had devoted a half-dozen paragraphs to criticism of the Democratic civil rights bill and defense of his own bill. He ad-libbed another paragraph. The "Beltway interest groups" had refused a compromise that would avert hiring quotas, he said. He slammed his fist on the podium. Beforehand Bush had complained to aides that the press often ignored his statements on civil rights. "Well, you did it now," Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater told him as they returned to the White House. "They'll have trouble ignoring that." (The outburst got full media play.)

What's interesting about this episode is how emotional Bush has become on the civil rights issue. He's passionately opposed to the Democratic bill that would make it easier for minorities and women to win civil rights litigation over hiring and promotions. In 1990 he was opposed too, but not passionately. Bush spent weeks last year in search of a civil rights compromise. When none emerged, he vetoed the Democratic bill. Bush said the bill encouraged racial quotas. Still, he vetoed it reluctantly. This year the reluctance is gone. He has no qualms about a second veto. Bush feels personally offended. He hates to have his motives questioned, and he thinks Democrats and civil rights leaders have done exactly that: accused him of opposing the Democratic bill only to exploit racial fears for political gain. And he claims that Democrats—and the press—haven't given his civil rights bill a fair shake.

Bush is half right, half wrong. He's right about the Democratic tactic. Any Republican who picks at the Democratic bill is instantly zapped for playing politics with race. Complaints are dismissed out of hand, even though there's a strong case that the bill encourages racial quotas in employment. (The case is that the bill spurs litigation that employers can't win, so they'll hire by informal quotas to stay out of court.) Bush, however, is convinced that Democrats, not the White House, are playing politics with civil rights. They dressed up their bill this year as a women's rights measure, not a civil rights bill. Then they added language that supposedly outlaws quotas, while refusing to change the provision in the bill that's likely to cause quotas in the first place. "Then it got personal," says Fitzwater. Bush was infuriated in May when Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt insisted he's not really for passage of a civil rights bill.

Actually Mitchell and Gephardt are on to something. When Democrats initially proposed new civil rights legislation, the Bush administration took the position that no bill was needed. That view was honestly arrived at (and I think correct), but it gave congressional Republicans the willies. They were leery of sounding too negative on civil rights and demanded an alternative they could be in favor of. Bush provided one. That's where he went wrong. The Bush alternative is different from the Democratic bill, but not dramatically. When asked to explain why it won't produce quotas, administration lawyers give a long, complicated, and unconvincing answer. (At bottom, their answer is that employers will have a better shot at winning litigation and thus won't stoop to quotas.) Some admit, in a stolen moment, to a preference for no bill.

Bush, however, has persuaded himself that his bill is critically needed. He was impressed by a three-page White House document that cites examples of how the Democratic bill leads to quotas and his doesn't. For instance, "A state police force denies employment to any applicant with a criminal record." It's a "defensible policy" under his bill; the Democratic bill provides "no defense" for it. Or "the American Cancer Society refuses to hire smokers. Can this meet the 'business necessity' test?" It can under his bill, but not under you know what.

In speeches, Bush piously defends his motives and his bill. "I want to sign a civil rights bill," he told graduates of the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, on May 30. At West Point he boasted that his bill "will ensure that Congress lives by the same rules it prescribes for others. And it will not force employers to choose between using quotas or the risk of costly litigation." By the way, the West Point address was hardly Willie Horton. "Let's not kid ourselves," Bush said. "Regrettably racism and bigotry still exist in this great country of ours. . . . The real question that's facing us is not whether to fight these evils, but how." The job of government, Bush said, "is to enhance, not redistribute, opportunity to ensure that all people get a fair chance to achieve their dreams." Bush's only excess was a line, swiped from Sununu, that was too flip for the occasion. Arguing that a new label doesn't change the Democratic bill, he said, "You can't put a sign on a pig and say it's a horse."

Bush's hard line gets constant reinforcement from many of his staff and visitors to the White House. In April former New York Mayor Ed Koch dropped by Sununu's office. Sununu took him to Bush's study, where the president was finishing lunch with Vice President Quayle. Koch held forth against the Democratic bill. In May Democratic Representative Charles Stenholm of Texas contacted Sununu about a possible civil rights compromise. When Bush got wind of this, he telephoned Stenholm on May 24, said he wanted to sign a civil rights bill, and hoped for a compromise. Stenholm said he'd see if Democrats would go along. They wouldn't. "If we'd seen some movement [by Democrats], we'd have gone back to the White House," Stenholm said. He voted for Bush's bill, which lost 266-162 on June 4.

Bush's staff is ferociously opposed to the Democratic bill, some staffers to any civil rights bill. This wasn't the case in 1990. Then, aides—particularly staff secretary Jim Cicconi, now a Washington attorney—promoted back-channel discussions between Bush and civil rights leaders Vernon Jordan and William Coleman. Now

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staffers are wary of indirect approaches. William Kristol, chief of Quayle's staff, provided a test of the White House attitude at the senior staff meeting on May 29. At a supermarket newsstand, he'd come across a Mark Russell joke in a weekly collection of political columns. The joke went: "The Democrats are making a big change in their civil rights bill. A spokesperson said, Remember the hiring quotas we said weren't in the bill last year. We just took them out." Everyone laughed.

Given his passion, Bush has become the most forceful administration lobbyist on the civil rights bill. He's driven all the more by his belief that Democrats won't compromise because they truly want a quota bill. When eighteen moderate Republicans showed up in the Cabinet Room for a lobbying session over coffee and danish on May 30, Bush took charge. Last year he let Attorney General Richard Thornburgh and White House counsel Boyden Gray do most of the talking. And when Bush spoke last year, he relied on note cards. Now he speaks off the cuff. Bush gave a detailed appraisal of the Democratic bill. He said employers would be forced to match the racial makeup of the local job pool, even if that meant hiring marginally qualified workers. He talked on and on, then took questions. GOP Representative Jan Meyers of Kansas urged Bush not to appear "anti-woman" in his opposition to the Democratic bill. "We're not," he snapped.

Another Republican asked why Bush had "pulled the plug" on negotiations between Democrats and leaders of the Business Roundtable on a compromise. Bush said he hadn't, not mentioning that his aides had warned against a deal not sanctioned by the White House. Bush said he'd called the corporate executive who'd convened the negotiations, his old pal Robert Allen of AT&T. Allen had been zinged by *The Wall Street Journal* as soft on quotas, and Bush was eager to buck him up. According to Bush, Allen said the negotiations were already collapsing due to the civil rights lobby's intransigence. Further proof, in Bush's mind, of the rightness of his cause. ●

A doctor protests.

INSULT TO INJURY

By Jerome E. Groopman

At first blush, the Bush administration's recent decision to renege on altering the immigration law that bars HIV-infected foreigners from entering this country without a special waiver might seem to make some sense. Limiting entry into the country for people carrying a transmissible virus superficially seems quite reasonable. But unfortunately the decision owes more to the politics of homophobia and xenophobia than to the ethics of public health.

In our current zeal to protect ourselves from infected foreigners, we tend to forget that Americans have been the main exporters of AIDS to the world. Although the prevalence of HIV infection is highest among populations in Central Africa, they're not mobile as we are. The World Health Organization recently presented reasonable and somewhat conservative estimates of the prevalence of HIV infection among adults between the ages of 19 and 45 in the United States. The data are striking: about 1 in 75 men and 1 in 400 women in this age group carry the virus. Worldwide, there will be 40 million people infected with the AIDS virus by the end of this decade. The United States now joins such enlightened governments as the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in threatening deportation of foreigners carrying HIV. France, England, Germany, and Italy—to name a few Western countries—have not even raised the idea of such an immigration law.

HIV is a virus transmissible by sexual intercourse, transfusion, intravenous drug use, and from mother to child during the birth process. HIV infection leads to AIDS, a disorder of the immune system with development of severe infections, neurological dysfunction, and certain cancers. The general physical condition of people with clinical AIDS is often that of debilitation, and the libido declines at a rate faster than their immune function. Moreover, the vast majority of traveling HIV-infected people, specifically homosexual men, hemophiliacs, or women infected through heterosexual intercourse, are generally well educated with respect to both the danger of transmitting the virus to others through unsafe sex as well as their own self-interest in not contracting venereal diseases. There are no data to suggest that allowing HIV-infected people to enter the United States will contribute to the spread of the virus. Dr. Louis Sullivan, secretary of health and human services, affirmed recently that there was no scientific rationale to bar entry of HIV-infected foreigners. The major vector of the spread of HIV is currently through intravenous drug abuse in the West, and few hard-core addicts have frequent-flyer miles to vacation on our shores.

The administration's decision does a great disservice to people with HIV infection and to all those involved in the medical struggle against AIDS. But it also damages the reputation of our country abroad. During last year's debate on this question, the organizers of the International AIDS Conference, attended by 15,000 people and generating about $15 million to the host city, decided the conference would not occur in a nation that discriminates against people with HIV. Harvard University took the appropriate position that it would only serve as the host of the conference planned for 1992 if the law were repealed. Considerable effort and seed money have already been expended to

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organize the infrastructure of the 1992 Boston AIDS meeting. All that is now likely to be annulled. The United States has become a virtual pariah nation among scientists and physicians for its stance on HIV.

Despite the rationality of laws against genuine threats to public health from immigrants, the application of the principle to HIV makes no sense. It is a measure essentially directed against homosexuals. That is the resident chord struck among the right wing, a cheap shot that can be easily exploited in congressional election campaigns, garnering the votes of religious fundamentalists and bigots. Curiously, there is no effort to extend the regulation to other less stigmatized conditions. Hepatitis, for example, is a far more contagious virus than HIV. It affects millions of people throughout the world and hundreds of thousands of Americans. It can lead to cancer of the liver. It is transmitted not only by blood, sex, and contaminated needles, but also in the saliva. Should foreigners seeking to vacation in the United States be subjected to an inquisition about their livers? What of the newly discovered virus that is associated with an aggressive form of leukemia, termed HTLV? This virus, a very distant cousin of HIV, and spread in virtually identical ways, is found in up to 5 percent of the general population in southern Japan and widely distributed throughout the Caribbean. It is now known to be associated not only with leukemia but also neurological diseases, including syndromes similar to multiple sclerosis. Should affluent Japanese tourists eagerly invading Disneyland be asked whether they originate from the Kyushu prefecture, and undergo blood tests for HTLV? HTLV has been detected in a fraction of Ethiopian Jews; one can hardly imagine the Israelis abandoning their brethren on this basis.

President Bush's child died of leukemia, the nightmare of every parent, and a loss from which one never recovers. He must certainly understand the importance of caring for people with life-threatening diseases. It stretches the imagination to think he would consciously humiliate patients carrying a leukemia virus for the sake of political expediency by forcing them to obtain a waiver to enter the United States. Would the right wing of the Republican Party score votes in a tight congressional election by boasting that dying leukemia patients were required to obtain waivers to be treated in our cancer centers?

HIV foreigners will not seek haven in the United States; one need not fear that we will become the hospice of the world for AIDS. The poor and infected from developing countries are hardly in a position to move en masse to this country. Temporary visitors from other Western countries, if they become sick while in the United States, are covered by their own socialized medical insurance in their country of origin. Those settling here for longer periods are not granted visas in the first place without proof that they have the ability to support themselves. In any case, America is the symbol of freedom, tolerance, rationality, and medical excellence, all attributes that provide hope and will to those people with AIDS fighting to survive. We do a disservice not only to ourselves as a caring nation but, more important, to the ill who look to us for medical support and progress that could change their condition from one of great suffering and ultimate death to a more chronic and controlled illness.

Societies have an obligation to protect themselves from importing diseases, but that protection comes from a sober assessment of the real risks posed and the methods needed to reduce such risks. Societies such as ours that are blessed with the highest levels of medical research and technology have the opportunity and responsibility to share such knowledge, not only with scientific peers but also with the patients whose lives depend upon the progress of such research. The epidemic will not be contained by blocking entry of infected people from abroad who wish to visit, or to get access to an experimental drug, or to receive a second opinion from an expert physician, or attend a conference to both learn and teach. The immigration law snuffs out the thousand points of light formed by the laboratory researchers, clinical care givers, social workers, and philanthropists who have committed themselves to battle an epidemic that could lead to the deaths of tens of millions.

I am hardly an activist who leaps to the barricades. I am a scientist who believes that real change is effected not by rhetoric but by hard work in the laboratory and in the clinic. But in this case, the chanting of AIDS activists in the streets is echoed in the laboratories and hospitals: "Shame, shame on America."

JEROME E. GROOPMAN is the director of the divisions of blood diseases, cancer, and AIDS at Deaconess Hospital/Harvard Medical School.

The Republicans' racial quotas.

PARTY LINES

By Linda Chavez

If the Republicans have their way in this year's reapportionment battle, the Democrats will become indelibly marked in voters' minds as the party of minorities. In California, Texas, Ohio, Illinois, and elsewhere, the Republican Party is giving legal, financial, logistical, and political help to create new black and Hispanic districts that will be all but guaranteed to elect black and Hispanic Democrats. Through this strategy, the Republicans hope to make it harder for many white Democrats in neighboring—and subse-

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quently whiter—districts to win re-election, by siphoning off a key segment of their support: the minority vote. In their attempt to regain control of the House of Representatives, Republicans who rightly oppose racial quotas in employment are cynically enforcing them in electoral redistricting.

The main instrument of the Republican strategy is the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is the most radical piece of civil rights legislation ever enacted—and the most effective. But it has been transformed over the last twenty-five years from a law whose original purpose was to give Southern blacks access to the voting process to one whose chief use today is to try to guarantee the election of proportional numbers of blacks and Hispanics at all levels of government. The transformation came subtly through a series of court decisions and amendments to the act, which must undergo periodic reauthorization.

Originally, the act was designed to take away temporarily from certain Southern states the right to determine their own voting procedures, transferring that authority to the Justice Department and the federal courts. The need for such a draconian measure was clear. Some political jurisdictions in the Deep South had shown an uncanny ability to thwart every effort to extend voting rights to blacks since Reconstruction. In 1965 only 6 percent of blacks were registered to vote in Mississippi. Blacks were prevented from voting by physical intimidation, economic retaliation, and most often by the application of phony "literacy" tests.

Within two years of passage of the Voting Rights Act, black registration in Mississippi had jumped to 60 percent, and blacks were soon electing their own representatives for local, state, and federal office. By 1970, when the act was up for the first of several extensions, some 400 blacks had been elected to office in the Deep South, 81 in Mississippi alone. Unquestionably, Southern blacks had made great strides in securing the right to vote, but civil rights proponents saw no reason to abandon the onerous provisions of the act. In fact, one provision in particular, which gave federal authorities the power to approve redistricting plans, made the act's retention—and expansion—essential to minority political aspirations. In 1975 Hispanics, American Indians, Alaskan natives, and Asians were included under the special protection of the act, even though these groups, unlike blacks in the South, had not been systematically denied the right to vote. But the most far-reaching expansion of the act came in 1982.

At the heart of the 1982 amendments was a basic change in the definition of what constitutes discrimination in voting. Both the original Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which outlawed discrimination in employment and public accommodations) were intended to provide equal opportunity to minorities. The point of both bills was to ensure that the process was fair, that the same rules apply to whites and minorities whether in competing for jobs or casting ballots.

However, by the early 1970s civil rights advocates were pressing a different claim. They wanted the *outcome* of competition to be "fair" as well. How to judge whether an outcome is fair? Civil rights advocates argued that the only way was to see if minorities won proportional representation—in jobs, college admissions, and election results. Thus the 1982 Voting Rights Act amendments adopted the standard that "the extent to which members of a protected class have been elected to office" would be the way to see whether minorities had an equal opportunity "to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice." The act also included a proviso that proportional representation for protected groups was not its intent, but it has been ignored as often as the stipulation that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not require preferential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender.

The Reagan Justice Department, despite its vigorous legal challenge to quotas in employment, chose not merely to acquiesce to the voting rights amendments but even brought suit under the amendments in a number of redistricting cases. Shortly after the amendments became law in 1982, the Justice Department joined Hispanic and black plaintiffs contesting the drawing of Chicago municipal election districts. The suit ultimately led to a new districting plan, including the creation of four new Hispanic wards in the city.

In 1985 the department filed suit to force the Los Angeles City Council to create a new Hispanic city council district. Again in 1988 the Reagan Justice Department filed suit in LA, joining with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) in urging that a new Hispanic district be created in a Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors election. The legal case throughout was a classic quota argument: that since the proportion of minority candidates did not equal the proportion of minority voters, discrimination was taking place. The proposed remedy in each case was a gerrymandered voting district to elect a black or Hispanic candidate.

The Justice Department has used the 1982 amendments to challenge voting procedures in dozens of political jurisdictions in the last nine years. Now the Republican National Committee has added its considerable resources to the fight to create "safe" black and Hispanic seats under the Voting Rights Act, although much of the actual legal work is carried out by Lawyers for the Republic and Fairness for the '90s, two non-partisan groups. These groups not only file legal briefs on behalf of minority plaintiffs who want to challenge districting decisions, they provide free computer software packages that make it possible for groups representing blacks and Hispanics to draw their own versions of electoral districts to maximize minority voting strength. The main beneficiaries of this largess are

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groups like the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the Southwest Voter Research Institute, hardly allies of the Bush administration or the Republican Party.

None of this is done, of course, out of a sense of civic duty. Minority redistricting will mean incumbent Democrats like Representatives Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois, David Bonier of Michigan, and Martin Frost of Texas will face tough re-election campaigns. If the strategy works—and about 90 percent of such legal challenges have succeeded in the last few years—these white liberals will be forced to run in more conservative white districts or face minority challenges in new majority Hispanic or black districts.

Ironically, the group that stands to lose most in this reshuffle is black and Hispanic Republicans. Already racial gerrymandering has made it more difficult—not less—for black and Hispanic Republican candidates to be elected. After the Justice Department and Mexican-American civil rights groups got through redrawing district lines to create a "safe" Hispanic district in the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors case, the real loser was a Republican Hispanic candidate. The redrawn district packed in so many Hispanic Democrats that the Republican, Sarah Flores, came in third in a four-way race. She was the top vote-getter in an earlier election, which the court invalidated because the old district lines included more non-Hispanics than Hispanics.

Many of the newly drawn Hispanic districts have an explicit political objective. When ethnicity is the sole criterion, middle-class Hispanics are thrown in with poorer Hispanics even though their political interests might be quite different, in districts that often look like a map of the Great Lakes. As Rodolfo Acuña, a college professor and author of *Occupied America*, suggests, "The Latino middle class, the chief beneficiary of the civil rights movement, can no longer cold-shoulder the interests of the Latino poor without paying a political price, because the two now constitute one political community." But it is precisely these middle-class Hispanic voters who are most likely to vote Republican.

Black Republicans too face a danger from the RNC strategy. In Dallas, where the Justice Department has sued to force the creation of single-member districts for electing judges, the likely losers, if the Supreme Court upholds the claim, will be the two minority judges now in office in Dallas who are Republican. The ranks of black Republican officeholders are already thin—and shrinking. According to Campaign Directions, a New Jersey-based political consulting firm that helps elect black Republican candidates, there are only 67 black Republican elected officials in the country, out of more than 7,000 total black officeholders. Before the last election there were 106. The RNC redistricting strategy will make it even more difficult to recruit black and Hispanic Republican candidates in the future.

The Republican Party can't have it both ways—at least not if it hopes to retain any claim to principles. Racial quotas are either a bad thing or they're not. If they're bad in employment practices—as the Bush administration argues over the Civil Rights Act of 1991—then, by the same token, they're bad in electoral redistricting.

LINDA CHAVEZ, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, was the Republican senatorial nominee for Maryland in 1986.

Eritrea's sudden rebirth.

NEW WORLD ORPHAN

By Robert D. Kaplan

The "New World Order" officially began last week. An old empire, freighted with culture and historical tradition, completed its long process of collapse. A new state emerged, able and willing to defend itself. But for America's Eurocentric intellectuals there is a problem. This seminal event—which was supposed to have happened in Europe, or at least in the Middle East—occurred in an apparently unlikely locale: Africa.

The empire that crumbled was that of the Ethiopian Amharas, a cultural and linguistic universe of which the West is generally ignorant. Eritrea, formerly Ethiopia's Red Sea province, is the new state. Unlike Soviet Georgia, the Baltic republics, or Croatia and Slovenia in Yugoslavia, the threat of military occupation does not hang over Eritrea's head. Unlike Kurdistan, Eritrea does not require American troops to protect its safe haven. There is nothing jerry-built about Eritrea. Its history split off from that of Ethiopia's in the ninth century with the demise of the Roman-era Kingdom of Axum. Eritreans speak Tigrinya, whereas the people of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, speak Amharic. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front, fighting for thirty years in the century's longest war, is considered by military experts to be the finest guerrilla force in the world.

The EPLF boasts Africa's best grass-roots famine relief and health care networks, an agricultural extension service, an education system, and a well-documented record of protecting human rights, evinced by the group's estimable treatment of thousands of Ethiopian prisoners of war. Orotta, the EPLF base camp, features a large underground hospital complex powered by wind and solar energy, producing its own aspirin and malaria tablets, intravenous solutions, and sanitary napkins for women throughout Eritrea. Isaias Aferworki, the

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EPLF's leader, remarked that all that really needs to be done about statehood is for the rest of the world to recognize formally what has already existed for years in Eritrea: a functioning polity that is not Communist, but that, due to continuous war and isolation from the outside world, is so miserably poor that currency barely circulates and famine is commonplace.

Over the years the EPLF has transformed the ideals of self-help and group cohesiveness into a new kind of ideology that resists classification. The Eritreans remove their dead and wounded from the field so quickly that spy satellites have never gotten a fix on their losses. Divisions between Muslims and Orthodox Christians bedevil Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union; in Eritrea Muslims and Orthodox Christians fight side by side, and intermarriages are common. "They're like the Viet Cong," said one observer, "except that the Eritreans actually like each other." They are, in every respect, a nation. It is only the hard and dangerous conditions they offer to visitors, their great distance from television satellite facilities, their poverty, and their skin color that has caused the world not to take a sustained look at the fascinating circumstances of their emergence.

In 1889 the Italians completed their colonial conquest of Eritrea, while the Amhara king Menelik II finished conquering the rest of Ethiopia, occupying the Oromo lands to the south of the Amhara capital, Addis Ababa, and Tigre to the north. When the Italians tried to advance beyond Eritrea into Tigre, Menelik's army stopped them. The Battle of Adowa in 1896 marked the only time in history that a European army fought a set-piece battle with an African one and lost. The Amharas were en route to becoming the lone African people never to be colonized. Their national institutions were to be subverted only twice: by Italian fascists between 1936 and 1941, and by Soviet Communists in the 1970s and 1980s. From Mussolini's 1936 invasion of the Amhara kingdom the world remembers the sickening newsreel images of a white army, equipped with tanks and poison gas, vanquishing a black one, equipped with horses and spears, led by Menelik's successor, Haile Selassie. But what the newsreel images did not show was that much of Mussolini's army, just like the Italian army at Adowa in 1896, was in fact made up of black Eritreans, for whom the prospect of Amhara colonialism was even worse than the Italian variety.

By 1936 the Italians had been ruling in Eritrea for forty-seven years. Their presence, and the dynamic economic development it spawned, helped to crystallize a separate Eritrean identity that had been building for centuries. The Eritreans, whose coastline had been frequented by Pharaonic Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, and British before the Italians arrived, wanted little to do with the Tigreans or the Amharas, whom the Eritreans considered xenophobic, underdeveloped races of the interior, cut off from the outside world. But following World War II, Haile Selassie's offer of military base facilities to the United States led the Western powers to make Eritrea a semiautonomous province under Amhara sovereignty (which is why to this day the most hated historical figure in Eritrea is John Foster Dulles). Haile Selassie never respected the autonomy agreement, and in 1961 a guerrilla rebellion broke out in Eritrea, which finally ended last week.

Ethiopia's Thirty Years' War contained several stages. In 1974 guerrilla pressure helped force Haile Selassie from power. But it was not a typical African coup: Amhara Ethiopia, with a Semitic language and written literature going back to antiquity, was far too sophisticated for that. Ethiopia's revolution came close to paralleling the French. It encompassed a two-year orgy of strikes, officers' conspiracies, radical committee formations, and hair-splitting arguments over political theory that resulted in mass executions and eventually brought to power a provincial army bureaucrat, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who used Stalinist methods to fortify traditional Amhara imperialism. The Soviets, who at the time were supporting the EPLF, switched sides to Mengistu.

As a consequence, the Eritreans ditched their own short-lived romance with communism years before the Reagan administration's favorite, Jonas Savimbi, did the same. War, plus Mengistu's policies of crop requisitions and collectivization, especially against recalcitrant Tigrean and Eritrean peasants, ignited a famine in 1984 that in every detail resembled Stalin's state-imposed famine in the Ukraine in 1921. Stalin's dictum—"paper will put up with anything that is written on it"—became Mengistu's, as the five-foot-five-inch army captain issued directives to move millions of people from their ancestral homes. The American media, unconcerned with all this background, packaged the Ethiopian cataclysm as a one-dimensional feature story on drought and famine relief.

Though the Eritreans provided the principal resistance to Mengistu's Soviet-backed regime throughout the 1980s, the State Department refused even to talk with the EPLF because it considered the group "separatist." (The permanence of postcolonial borders was then holy writ.) But later came the Communist collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And with its own separatist movements to fight off, the Soviets could no longer afford the luxury of supporting Mengistu's colonialist ambitions. As the Soviets deserted Addis Ababa, the EPLF and other guerrilla movements rolled up the remainder of the Ethiopian countryside, forcing American officials to recognize the EPLF for the sake of "a civilized transition" away from Mengistu's imperial and Communist rule. As in the case of the Kurds and some individual Soviet republics, Washington's willingness to accept Eritrea's reality was a gradual process where, in a dramatically changing world, new facts on the ground and the desperate needs of millions of real people overshadowed abstract concepts of "territorial sovereignty."

The Eritreans recently reached an agreement with the Tigrean-dominated guerrilla coalition now ruling

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Addis Ababa to transport food through Eritrean Red Sea ports to famine-stricken Tigreans, Amharas, and Oromos in the interior. All these ethnic factions seem to be evincing a degree of flexibility that is rare not only in the Middle East but in much of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union besides. In fact, the loose-confederation strategies constantly being trumpeted for the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Iraq actually have a better chance to work in Ethiopia, where State Department African hands are better placed than any other group of outsiders to be honest brokers. The foundation for this strong American position was built in 1989 by former President Jimmy Carter. Though the Carter administration naively allowed the Soviets virtually to walk into Addis Ababa in 1977 and 1978 to consolidate Mengistu's rule, Carter presciently went back to the scene of his earlier failure in order to involve himself in the Eritrean-Ethiopian problem at a time when the rest of the world was focused on Eastern Europe.

The stage is now set for a final irony. While American intellectuals ramble on in innumerable journals about new political architectures for Europe and the Soviet Union, they seem to be distant bystanders while Europeans and Soviets, however slowly, invent their own futures. America's Middle East experts, in the meantime, are still getting insufficient cooperation from both Arabs and Israelis to have much effect. But it is the Africanists, in the case not only of Ethiopia but also of Angola—as we saw in the historic peace agreement brokered principally by Americans—who, in the words of late Europeanist secretary of state, Dean Acheson, have the chance to be "present at the creation." Helping to craft new, post-cold war political systems in Africa may not be much compared with building a new order in Europe after World War II, as Acheson and his colleagues did. It is an inspiring prospect nonetheless.

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A report from the Soviet Union.

REVOLUTION '91

By Morton Kondracke

MOSCOW

On May 21, a month into his latest phase as a born-yet-again center-left reformer, Mikhail Gorbachev went to a human rights conference honoring the memory of Andrei Sakharov. Gorbachev sat through the entire opening session (two hours) and the concert of classical music that followed (another two hours). The length of his stay was clearly designed to appeal to democrats who are deeply suspicious of his political zigzaggery. What I found more remarkable, though, was the way Gorbachev and his enemy-turned-ally, Boris Yeltsin, sat fifty feet apart in the concert hall for two hours (Yeltsin skipped the music) without acknowledging each other's presence. More remarkable still, their fellow citizens in the audience completely ignored both.

Like an American president, Gorbachev travels with a contingent of security men who talk into their sleeves, but there was almost no screening of the audience for tickets, let alone weapons, and perfect strangers like me could walk right up to the presidential box without being stopped. Both Yeltsin and Gorbachev listened sober-faced as Sakharov's widow, Yelena Bonner, briefly bade them both welcome and proceeded to recite a litany of continuing human rights depredations in the Soviet Union, notably the beating and deportation of thousands of Armenians in Azerbaijan. Sakharov's friend Yuri Orlov called for the Communist Party to fade out of power and into minority status. For the rest of the session, neither speakers nor performers (cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, pianist Sviatislav Richter, conductor Vladimir Spivakov) so much as nodded in Gorbachev's direction. No one stood when he arrived. No one referred to the fact that he let Sakharov back from exile or started the process of reform in the Soviet Union. No one stirred when he left.

The music was sublime, but the city outside is getting uglier by the day. Except for the Kremlin's palaces, the subway, and the newly invigorated churches, nothing is being maintained. The streets are filthy, and to walk down them is to risk getting brained by crumbling cornices. Courtyards are mudholes. The shops look as if they've been looted. And Muscovites are getting steadily surlier with each other. "It's an open-air insane asylum," says one frequent visitor. Waiters and hotel employees respond to simple requests with stares of boredom and contempt.

Yet at the same time, Moscow is throbbing with politi-

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cal action. It's 1776 and 1789 happening at once. A revolution is under way that's been bloody already in the Caucasus and the Baltics, and there's still a chance of general conflagration or a victory by the Redcoats. Simultaneously, constitutions are being written and debated for the Union and several republics, and an attempt is being made to create a whole new economic system. It's a hair-raising spectacle. A race is on between economic decline and political reform. Reform, if it comes fast enough, could buoy the economy. Decline, if it comes faster, could drown the prospects of reform.

Here's the optimistic scenario, as presented by William Green Miller, the president of the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations and an attendee at the Sakharov conference. Reform leader Boris Yeltsin decisively wins the presidency of Russia on June 12. As the first popularly elected national leader in Russian history, he plays a strong hand in negotiations with the unelected Soviet President Gorbachev on the terms of an All-Union Treaty to be agreed upon by July. The treaty, a compromise, gives Russia and other republics control of their own taxes, budgets, and privatization formulas for most industries, while the central government controls national security, international diplomacy, and interrepublic communications and transportation.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Also in July, goes the optimistic scenario, Gorbachev convinces the G-7 industrial nations that he really intends to move swiftly to a free market economy, end the Communist Party's control of national life, slash the military budget, free the Baltic republics, and stop aid to Cuba. In return, the G-7 promises huge loans and loan guarantees to see the country through its painful transition. The gloom lifts. Democrats trounce Communists in local elections. The USSR and the republics write themselves democratic constitutions. Gorbachev replaces many of the Communists in his government with democrats and agrees to stand for election. Conceivably, he even wins.

It's a beguiling script. Since April, when Gorbachev and Yeltsin quit trying to destroy each other, individually beat back attempts by neo-Stalinists to topple them both, and signed their so-called Nine-plus-One Agreement, it has even become plausible. But scenarios of doom are just as plausible, and they have many more adherents in the Soviet Union. Gavril Popov, the democratic mayor of Moscow, fears a series of political deadlocks in which divided democrats can't beat the Communists, and Gorbachev, under pressure from the military-industrial complex and the KGB, won't yield power to Yeltsin's Russian government.

What worries Popov most is that next winter or spring the food that people have been hoarding in their houses will run out and energy supplies will run low. If political gridlock prevents improvement of the distribution system, there will be riots, people will turn against feckless democrats, and the hardliners will return, possibly with Gorbachev zagging back to the right in order to save his skin. "This country won't survive another winter," Popov said in an interview. Western diplomats here regard this scenario as plausible—"Nine-plus-One has bought the reformers time, no more," said one American—and Stalinists and neo-fascists look upon it as their way to power. Another American said that the Soviet Union is like a dynamited building just after the charges have gone off. "You see only the puffs of smoke," he said. "The collapse will follow immediately."

Truly pessimistic scenarios still contemplate civil war and the possibility that dueling armies will menace each other, and maybe the United States, with nuclear weapons. Western diplomats think this unlikely because Russians remember 1917 and the millions of deaths that followed, and anyway regard mass violence as something that only Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis engage in, not them. But these observers don't rule out that mass privation could lead to public

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Life in Hell

DONETSK, UKRAINE

Political deals and economic plans for the future of the Soviet Union get drafted in the dachas and back rooms of Moscow, but the real hammer of change is being wielded in dirty, polluted mining towns like this one, where 50,000 men stopped producing coal this spring and threatened Mikhail Gorbachev with a complete shutdown of the Soviet economy. To visit Donetsk and go down into Red Star Mine No. 9 for a few hours makes you wonder why Donetsk's miners didn't shut down the economy long ago. There are twenty-one mines and several smoky steel mills within the city limits. The town is covered in gray soot. Off main thoroughfares, the streets are unpaved and become rivers of mud when it rains. Both the mines and the mills pile their refuse onto huge slag heaps, also within the city limits, from which rain washes toxic pollutants into the ground water and the Kalmius River. Cases of leukemia among local children have gone up 20 percent within the past five years, according to the director of the town's overcrowded, underequipped children's hospital.

Red Star Mine No. 9 was opened in 1916, and it looks as though nothing has been improved (or painted) since, except that fluorescent bulbs intermittently light some of the larger tunnels, engine-driven machines grind the coal out of the rock and move it by conveyor belts toward the surface, and electronic devices (instead of canaries) warn of the presence of methane gas. An official of the United Mine Workers of America who visited the mines here says that in other respects they resemble what American mines were like in the nineteenth century. To get to the coal face, miners typically spend forty-five minutes riding ancient conveyances and walking, and then have to crawl on their hands and knees, often in mud from water leaks. On the crawl I took for 150 yards through a three-foot-high passageway, the path was strewn with pipes and wood leftover from the tunnel's shoring. An ax lying in the path easily could have sliced someone's leg open. Ventilation is not bad toward the surface, but 1,400 to 1,900 feet down, where the men of Donetsk spend seven hours a day, five days a week for twenty years, the air is thick with coal dust. Crawling through the narrow spaces, sweat pours off your body. The miners who accompanied me said we were lucky not to see any of the rats that infest the tunnels.

And Red Star No. 9, by all accounts, is Donetsk's best mine, the one they show off to foreign visitors. Pure hell, say the miners, is to be found at the Chelyvskensev Mine, where the work is done in unventilated holes at 2,900 and 3,800 feet below the surface, where the temperature is 110 degrees, where the dust is so thick the men can't see an arm's length even with their headlamps on, and where the miners peel off their suits and work naked. Chelyvskensev also is plagued with water seepage and the threat of methane explosions. Vladimir Minenko, a 1991 strike leader who works in Chelyvskensev, said that his job "is slavery."

Prior to the first wave of strikes in the Soviet Union, in 1989, miners were paid an average of 240 rubles a month, which is the current median wage for most Soviet office and industrial workers. The 1989 strike, which started in the other great mining region of the country, the Kuzbass, located west of the Urals in Russia, did not get the miners any appreciable increase in pay. It was only on the eve of this year's strike that the government granted a 110-ruble monthly increase. Since the strike, pay has gone up again, and now the average miner makes about 490 rubles after taxes. On the other hand, prices have tripled since April. A pair of men's shoes that used to cost 40 rubles now sells for 115. A kilo of sugar went from 76 kopeks to 2.60 rubles. A TV set has gone from 750 rubles to 2,100.

This year the miners demanded more than money. They called for Gorbachev's ouster and the dismissal of the Communist-dominated Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Their demands were high, but their methods were moderate: they produced enough coal to keep power generators and steel mills working. They didn't win anything like the political changes they sought, but the strikes—involving 90 percent of Kuzbass miners, half of those at Donbass, and winning support from demonstrators all over the country—helped force Gorbachev into the so-called Nine-plus-One Agreement promising wide economic autonomy to the republics, including Russia, and the Ukraine. Gorbachev also turned over control of the Kuzbass mines to the government of Russia, headed by Boris Yeltsin, and Yeltsin has put worker strike committees in charge of determining how the mines will be privatized and managed in the future.

The miners in the Donbass region of the Ukraine, including those in Donetsk, have high hopes for a similar improvement in their lives, but they are likely to be bitterly disappointed. They pin their hopes on buzzwords. When the Ukraine is "sovereign," they say, "privatization" will produce "investment" and "modernization." Most of them don't understand that because mines here are not economically viable, reform is likely to mean shutdowns. Because most people here in the eastern Ukraine are ethnic Russians, a "sovereign" government of the Ukraine is not likely to mount expensive retraining programs for them. At the moment, there is no such thing as unemployment insurance in the USSR.

The manager of Red Star No. 9 also said he favors "privatization," but with several slugs of vodka in him he declared that everything in Donetsk was better under Stalin than it is now. "Under Stalin, the miners had caviar," he told me, and dismissed as "Western rumor" the fact that millions died under Stalin. The miners themselves, especially the strike leaders, detest the Communists and fervently declare themselves to be democrats. However, they are likely to be tested soon by trading slavery for joblessness.

MORTON KONDRACKE

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demands for order and that someone will emerge to give it to them.

Both optimists and pessimists consider it all but certain that Yeltsin will win the Russian presidency and set the upbeat scenario into motion. Polls show him far ahead of former Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, moderate former Interior Minister Vadim Bakatin, and three other candidates. Optimists hope he will win a trouncing majority on June 12—preferably close to 60 percent—avoiding a runoff and putting himself into a commanding position for negotiations with Gorbachev. Though Gorbachev is not endorsing any candidate, he's thought to favor Bakatin, a former adviser whom he fired last year under pressure from hard-liners. Ryzhkov, who had a popularity rating of 3 percent when he left the premiership, is the Communist Party's endorsed candidate. Significantly, he has tried to distance himself from the Party but is still getting blamed in the press for its heavy-handed tactics—for instance, threatening workers with the loss of jobs and apartments if they don't support him. Optimists hope a fourth candidate in the race, retired General Albert Makashov, who looks like, talks like, and admires Chile's Augusto Pinochet, will get less than 5 percent of the vote and discourage hard-liners from thinking they have any public support.

So Yeltsin wins. What next? Not a few of his supporters are afraid he will be assassinated. They are disappointed with his choice for a running mate, a former air force colonel and Afghanistan war hero named Alexander Rutskoi, who began political life as a right-winger and only lately has formed a group with the oxymoronic name Communists for Democracy. Yeltsin backers in the Democratic Russia movement fear that if Rutskoi succeeded Yeltsin, reform would collapse. Assuming this doesn't happen, Yeltsin has three problems. First, he has promised the moon to the public (free markets, more pay, lower prices, reduced taxes, better housing), forgetting to mention the pain of adjustment. So he risks severe disillusionment when he can't deliver overnight. Second, he heads into tough union treaty negotiations with Gorbachev, having encouraged his supporters to expect total victory: the reduction of the Soviet presidency to a figurehead position, while Russia and the other republics run their own affairs and handle mutual problems such as foreign policy through a confederative council, not through Gorbachev. Gorbachev is unlikely to crumble into a cipher, and the army, the KGB, and the military-industrial types are even more unlikely to let him. A deadlock could result—and deadlock leads to chaos.

Finally, Yeltsin's own supporters are divided. Some of them are toying with the idea of giving him "temporary" Lenin-style power to appoint "presidential representatives" to boss around local officials. Others worry that he's an autocrat in the making and don't want the new Russian constitution to give him the power to replace local officials, even though most of those officials are now Communists bent on blocking reform. The course favored by Popov is for the democrats to form a party, run candidates against the Communists, and beat them at the polls, but Yeltsin is reluctant to form such a party, and some of his staff say the people are getting tired of elections and just want strong "executive action." So there's a possibility of gridlock in Russia as well as in the Soviet Union. "We've been talking about free markets for five years now and nothing has happened," says Oleg Rumyantsev, a young parliamentarian. "Pretty soon, it's going to occur to people that incompetent democrats are to blame."

Given the direction of the Soviet economy (downward, and fast), the failure to produce economic reform and a turnaround could be catastrophic. "In the old system," one successful entrepreneur told me, "the government said 'march' and people marched. Under perestroika, everybody's fallen out of line and there's mass confusion." Inflation is in "the hundreds of percent," says one economist. Industrial production is expected to fall 15 percent this year, GNP 10 percent. No large plants have closed yet because of short supplies, but this could happen soon. And of course no provisions exist in the Soviet Union for unemployment.

The deus ex machina that all the optimists hope for—indeed, depend upon—is massive aid from the West, bought with a Gorbachev-Yeltsin commitment to total democratization, a free market, demilitarization, and an end to Soviet mischief in the Third World. A plan for this "Grand Bargain" has been worked out by Soviet economist Grigori Yavlinsky and massaged into a detailed proposal to the Bush administration by Soviet and American political scientists at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Jeffrey Sachs, the Harvard professor who helped design Poland's free market shock therapy, says that the plan would cost $30 billion per year for four years from all the Western countries, mainly in loans and loan guarantees to support convertibility of the ruble, build infrastructure, and provide a safety net for Soviet workers. The United States, he says, would have to spend only $3 billion a year in actual budget outlays—just one-hundredth of the defense budget and far less than the Marshall Plan for postwar Europe, which cost a total of 5 percent of America's annual GNP over four years, or $300 billion in today's dollars.

Sachs says that, per capita, the Yavlinsky plan would cost about the same as the Western stabilization plan currently working in Poland—and would involve the same massive reforms in the economy. Gorbachev, who knows what Yavlinsky is proposing, has not committed himself to the program. Sachs thinks he might do so at the G-7 economic summit in London and that President Bush should encourage him by saying that Western aid will be available if he does. Bush is waiting for Gorbachev to move first. At the rate events are going in Moscow, one of them had better act soon. ●

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Misogyny, liberalism, and the Kennedys.

THE END OF THE DREAM

By James Carroll

Something happened at the Kennedy estate in Palm Beach to a nearly anonymous young woman; we may never know with certainty what it was. Something happened to William Smith and his family when the young woman charged him with rape. Something happened to Senator Edward Kennedy when details of that "traditional Easter weekend" were revealed in the media. And of course through it all—here is my subject—something happened to us.

By "us" I do not mean all Americans or even most Americans, though the Kennedy mystique, fed by an endless torrent of gossip, continues to fascinate even those who claim to disdain the family. By "us" I do not mean all Democrats, or even all liberals, though many have continued to see in Senator Kennedy, despite his well-known flaws, a tribune of their most cherished causes. Recently, for example, liberals rejoiced to see Kennedy's twenty-two-year advocacy of universal access to health care approach a first fruition in Congress.

By "us" I mean American liberals of a certain age—the oldest were teenagers during World War II, the youngest were teenagers during Vietnam—for whom the defining idea of politics was the New Frontier. Internationally and domestically, the New Frontier gave us our first expectations of society, of government, and of ourselves, and they were profoundly hopeful. Despite three decades of steady disenchantment, these American liberals still recognize in themselves that visceral, dogged hope for their country and *all* its people, and know where it began.

Though the rhetoric of the New Frontier—"bear any burden . . . oppose any foe"—would come to seem naive and even dangerous, and though the association of a political program with a dynastic cult of personality would undercut both that program and the idea that government could properly pursue a liberal agenda, still the New Frontier would serve throughout our adult lives as an implicit standard against which we would measure all politics and all public ideals. The Kennedys, with their cosmopolitan style, their devotion to art and the intellect, enabled us to break not only with the Rotarianism of Ike and Nixon but also with the earnest, dull liberalism of Stevenson and Humphrey. JFK gave us the world. We too would be Berliners. The Alliance for Progress would connect us with Latin America. When de Gaulle admired Jackie, we felt invited to Paris. Suddenly our country seemed so much a part of the globe, and the frontiers to be crossed were not only the oceans that had restricted us, but the parochial habits of mind that had until then kept America so small.

The New Frontier was an inchoate idea that took its full form not from the careful reasoning of political savants, but from a swirling confluence of reform impulses that no one would understand or control until they had transformed the entire decade. The New Frontier began as John Kennedy's slogan, but it quickly became our generational theme, as the '60s became our one true era. If the Kennedy brothers had a genius, it was in the way they allowed the people who rallied to them throughout that period to redefine their public purposes. Martin Luther King was perhaps the first to do so. His stolid, mute witness from jail during the 1960 campaign recruited John Kennedy to his cause, and by the time of the great March on Washington, King had made the New Frontier his. He had made *us* his. Michael Harrington, far less dramatically, did something similar. His book *The Other America* put the cause of the poor near the top of the Kennedy agenda, and it has remained there, a permanent feature of the brothers' commitment.

In our memory, the New Frontier now connotes a devotion not only to civil rights but also to what the civil rights movement would become: a demand for economic justice. It does not discredit John Kennedy, or after him Bobby, to say that they came in some way despite themselves to stand with black people and the poor. In doing so, they embodied *our* idea of what America could be. We still believe what came to be a central idea of the New Frontier (no matter how unachievable it may seem to have become over the past three decades): that racial segregation and poverty simply have no place in America.

John Kennedy's assassination did not destroy our dream of the New Frontier. If anything, that catastrophe seared it into our hearts. And when Bobby

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showed us that the meaning of his own commitment could change further—as it did in response to Dorothy Day and Cesar Chavez and to the millions seeking an end to the war in Vietnam—we reclaimed the Kennedy idea from the realm of mere nostalgia (Camelot) and made it our own once more, but now as a battering ram against the recalcitrant forces of racism, injustice, and war that had defeated us early in the decade. The rhetoric of the New Frontier fell away as we embraced Bobby not as a mere replacement for his martyred brother, and not as a mere golden personality either. Bobby rescued our hope in our country, called it out of us, which then called something new out of him.

The Kennedy campaign of 1968 was a breakthrough in politics because it proved that the seemingly futile process of electioneering can indeed transform not only the terms of debate but also the candidate himself and what the people dare to expect from him. For a rare moment Bobby Kennedy was a leader in synchrony with his people.

What happened then (twenty-three years ago this month) we recall all too well. In order to understand the roots of the seemingly irrational loyalty we have felt over the decades toward Senator Edward Kennedy, we need only remember him in the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral giving us, in his brother's words and his own, a way not to go mad:

> "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." . . .
>
> This is the way he lived. My brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life, to be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it. Those of us who loved him and who take him to his rest today pray that what he was to us and what he wished for others will someday come to pass for all the world.

Ted Kennedy would strive in the Senate to be a worthy custodian of his brothers' legacy, and on issues as diverse as the plight of refugees and the prevention of AIDS, he would be a living embodiment of the compassion we'd first glimpsed in the New Frontier. As a perennial potential presidential candidate, and as an active one in 1980, he would help his party to keep faith with blacks and Hispanics, with the working poor, and with the liberals who had become America's political pariahs. Ted Kennedy enabled us to keep *our* faith. From 1968 on we belonged not to him precisely, but to the possible future he kept alive for us.

I have just recounted the originating myth of the Kennedy legend, the creation story of this extraordinary political and cultural phenomenon. To call it a myth is not to say that the story of the New Frontier is untrue, of course, but to say it *is* a story, a product of our common imagination. The Kennedy family was not alone in creating the Kennedy myth. We created it with them. For a full generation now we have told this story to ourselves. And as with any story, this one is a product of selection. We have featured those elements that serve the thematic purpose: the Kennedys' ongoing commitment, for example, to the dispossessed. We have downplayed or omitted those elements that, if highlighted, would undercut such a worthy goal. And of course here the example must be the dark restlessness of their sexuality. Taken by itself, a history of sexual compulsiveness warns of an inability to come to terms with the human condition, but in our culture it also involves, among men, a disturbing contempt for women.

The element in the real-life Kennedy experience going all the way back to Joe Sr. that we have refused to include meaningfully in this story is not the by now famous addiction to skirt chasing, but what the obsessive male hunt for "tail" always implies. The Kennedy mystique includes as an essential note from the grandfather to the sons and now, allegedly, to a grandson as well a commitment to the sophomoric—and sexist—idea of sexuality as conquest. The motive is not pleasure, but power. Women can seek conquest in sex, of course, but the concern here is with men. What is troubling when we detect such a pattern in the most politically powerful line of males of the century is the way in which, as a practical matter, it assumes the inferiority of women. It is profoundly, if implicitly, misogynist.

That is a serious accusation, but I mean to address it as much to "us," the co-authors of this myth, as to the family it demeans. My main point is not about what Kennedys have done, but what we have done in so uncritically spiraling our most fiercely held public ideal around the gyre of this profound moral contradiction. The real meaning of recent events in Palm Beach goes way beyond the revelation about the Kennedys and Smith to a major revelation about "us"; not the right wing who revel in this scandal as they have in the others, but the saddened liberals who, concerning this disquieting streak of Kennedy sexism, have long looked the other way, practicing, in the language of twelve-step recovery programs, what can only be called a co-dependant's denial. That phrase calls to mind alcoholism, and of course it is part of this story too. Do Ted Kennedy's publicized failures to rein his appetite for drink exacerbate the ongoing American refusal to face our various and worsening addictions? Regrettably the language of dysfunction applies here perfectly, and it teaches us not to impugn the behavior of others without examining our own. We are, as adherents of treatment programs would say, the enablers of this syndrome.

We have known for decades how Kennedy males are encouraged by the family ethos to regard women. Even shunning the tabloids, it has been impossible not to learn of the notorious liaisons from Gloria Swanson to Judith Exner to Marilyn Monroe. We know of Mary Jo

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Kopechne too, and because the full truth of what happened to her is still a mystery, her name has only deepened the silence of our complicity. We have taken for granted a long and continuing history of still-hidden philandering that otherwise scandal-mongering journalists have found possible, in our behalf, to wink at. Denial? What we have denied is not the family tradition of womanizing, but its meaning and its importance. What do we think "womanizing" is, if not a form of exploitation and abuse? When men and women reduce each other to sexual objects, they take the first step toward beating each other up, but of course in America it is the woman who is far more likely to get bashed. In fact, violence against women, particularly violence associated with depersonalized sex, is endemic in this country. Males are encouraged to deny this in almost every forum, from beer commercials to lewd clothing ads to courtrooms in which judges habitually reject the pleas of battered wives, to college campuses where tradition allows the word "no" to mean a coy form of "yes," to respectably published novels that feature female dismemberment.

This is a nightmare not just for women, but for men too, and we must wake up not from it but *to* it. Feminists must not be the only ones raising the alarm. Beaten-up women, raped girlfriends, battered wives, many of them thrown out on the streets, finally homeless and insane—this is today's "Other America." These grotesque forms of violence point to the deeper, if not necessarily physical, abuse of females by an intact system of male control. Whether this subtler abuse occurs in homes, schools, or workplaces, women lose when they submit to it, and they lose when they resist. The rise of violent assault on women in this country is a symptom of a pervasive disorder. If our hearts sink to realize that this is an issue that the Kennedys, in their sense of radical sexual license, are on the wrong side of, our hearts should quake at the knowledge that we have helped to keep them there.

Ted Kennedy is commonly accused of betraying his brothers' legacy, but that is not true. He has only brought its contradictions out into the open. In Gary Wills's word, he was long ago "imprisoned" by those contradictions, and sometimes it seems the very outrageousness of his behavior is an effort to break free. If his brothers had the advantage of not living long enough to face the consequences of their essential inconsistency, those consequences doomed Ted from the start of his life as the family head. No wonder, barely a year out of that noble pulpit at St. Patrick's, he made his wrong turn on Chappaquiddick. Was he asking us to release him from the jail of a role he could not play? If so, we refused. Aware of what he'd suffered, we excused him. Where we loved John Kennedy for associating himself with the glamorous James Bond, we have indulged an extraordinary pity for Ted, whose excesses seem so devoid of glamour. But James Bond is a figure not merely of the puerile now, but of the pathological. Bond showed American men that even muscular, fabulously bikinied, vigorously sexual women can be—want to be—conquered. His relations with women were not about sex, but about violence.

The multigenerational sexual habits of the Kennedys have revealed an emptiness at the core of their story. Those habits betray a permanent disregard for the nameless and faceless persons whose function is to submit. Females exist to submit to males. Whatever the facts in the alleged incident of rape in Palm Beach, the police report of that cry "Stop it, bitch!" went through us like a knife because, whether actually uttered by Smith or not, we recognized it as a command hurtling out of the very silence with which we had been protecting Kennedys for decades. That silence was broken by certain questions too. Why was Ted Kennedy so anxious to leave Florida? How could an uncle and family head so readily seek distance from an accused nephew? "I thought," he said, excusing his quick departure, "they only wanted to speak to Willie." The senator has admitted his early knowledge that police were investigating "a serious offense," but since it involved only "sexual battery" or "sexual harassment" he felt free to leave Florida without returning their call. For a moment it all felt strangely familiar, as if, for these people, the demand to account for actions and be responsible is an affront. The news from Palm Beach was all the more shocking because it seemed that the old Kennedy entitlement was back.

Conservatives, Republicans, many Democrats, most Americans perhaps, have long since concluded that the core of the Kennedy myth is rotten, that deceit is as much a part of it as fornication and adultery. To them these ruminations must seem naive in the extreme, a long overdue examination of the liberal conscience, a further proof of our shallowness. But we have dismissed the right-wing judgment of the Kennedys until now first because we know that what really appalls them is the Kennedys' powerful political agenda. While claiming the moral high ground, the conservative establishment has been systematically destroying this country for most of two decades now—its schools, its unions, its protections of the poor and the old and the sick, its civil rights laws, its banking system, even its roads and bridges. And Ted Kennedy has stood almost alone in opposing them with any force.

As chairman of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Kennedy initiated or enabled the enactment of legislation just in the last Congress that rescued the Head Start program, funded child care, provided job training for non-college-bound youth, raised the minimum wage, provided protection against discrimination to disabled and older Americans, increased funding for math and science education, established drug-abuse prevention programs for schools, supplied emergency funding to halt the spread of AIDS and to care for those already infected, and restricted an employer's ability to manipulate pension plans against

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a worker's interests. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, Kennedy aggressively challenged Edwin Meese as attorney general, and he played key roles in stopping the appointments to the Supreme Court of Robert H. Bork, Douglas Ginsberg, and, years ago, G. Harrold Carswell. Only five senators outrank Kennedy. After nearly thirty years he is one of the most powerful old-style liberals ever to serve in the Senate. As such, he is irreplaceable.

Ironically, as a defender of a whole range of programs designed to help the poor, including especially prenatal care and child care, he is in his public life one of the nation's greatest defenders of women. The grinding poverty toward which self-righteous Republicans and increasing numbers of neo-Democrats are so indifferent is a form of anti-woman violence too. Ted Kennedy's passion for justice and his ability to enshrine justice in legislation is real—and that is the main reason we have not only clung to him, but at times loved him.

But we have withheld our moral judgment from his personal immoderation for other reasons too. We know from our own lives that "morality," especially the morality of our intimate relationships, is not nearly so simple a matter now as "traditionalists" pretend. Broken marriages, confused sexual identities, isolated people in search of physical consolation, long-time partners failing each other—these seem to us the norm, not aberrations. Some Americans love to scapegoat public figures caught in moral compromise, but most of us are reluctant to pretend that obviously flawed politicians are the only ones who lack a clear vision of how to manage relationships, of how to get through impossibly lonely nights. If Gary Hart comes to mind as an exception here—we turned him out with rare efficiency—perhaps his real offense was the hubris of his direct challenge to the media, and to us therefore. Unlike Hart, Ted Kennedy is a traditional dissembler. He knows better than to flaunt his indiscretions or, God forbid, to dare the press to expose them. No one trusts out-and-out liars, but neither do we trust politicians who tell us they never lie, and we do not want our leaders to be pleasure-hating puritans. Prudery is no solution to the problem of excessive license.

But news of that "traditional Easter weekend," complete with the father waking up the sons who had already gone safely to bed, made something snap. This was a moment that in the jargon of treatment is called a turning point, and whether anyone else reached one this Easter, we did. Perhaps it was the grotesque reversal of the older generation so bizarrely leading the younger into what Catholics call "the occasion of sin." As women exist to submit to men, so sons exist to submit to fathers. We have in the Palm Beach story the ultimate parable of the bankruptcy of patriarchy. A young woman may be this patriarchy's most recent casualty; a son—William Smith—certainly is. The meaning of this family's tragedy is not Greek, but biblical. What is patriarchy—old Joe Kennedy calling the shots still—but the sins of the father being, in the King James phrase, "visited upon" not only sons but daughters too?

And visited upon us. The "moral" of this story is that we have sought to console ourselves in our own inner restlessness by not condemning restless excesses in our most public men. Because those excesses so often involve sexual exploitation, this denial has involved us in the terrible corruption, especially, of rampant misogyny. As if that weren't bad enough, it has permitted a flourishing of just the wrong idea of what leadership requires. Instead of the great civilizing ideal of virtue as the main qualification for public office—integrity conceived as wholeness between substance and appearance, between acts and intentions, between words and deeds—we have settled for a shoddy division between private life and public responsibility. Liberals have no monopoly on the dirty secrets of the leadership, and when it serves their purposes, conservatives apply this double standard too. The right, the left, men and women—all of us have abandoned something crucial in not holding our public figures to the simple ideal of whole personal honesty that we want for ourselves and that we instinctively demand of our children.

This theory of the two spheres of morality can open the way to almost anything, and in history it has. Idealistic Virginians who publicly opposed the institution of slavery, like Thomas Jefferson, no doubt used it to justify their continued private ownership of human beings. It has been used by war criminals who professed to oppose privately actions that their public duty required them to perform. And it is used implicitly today by conservative officials who relegate responsibility for the care of the dispossessed and the sick to "the private sector," as if hunger and homelessness and AIDS were not issues of public morality. Notice that such duality implies victims in these cases, and the duality we have tolerated in the Kennedy myth up to now does too. The victims there are women.

Attitudes about sexuality are only one signal of our need for change. The recent drift of politics threatens to make our nation's present division by race and class into a permanent if unlegislated apartheid. To oppose this, to oppose the prevailing economics of triage by which the poorest are simply written off, America desperately needs a renewed pragmatic liberalism. It is impossible for us whose convictions were shaped by their family's greatness not to hope that Kennedy men and women—the new generation, but also, if possible, their chastened and sober paterfamilias—can yet help to create it. But the cost of a surviving liberal vision must not be paid by hidden victims. Our part in this syndrome must end. The dualism in which we have engaged, applying separate moral standards to the private and public acts of Senator Edward Kennedy, has been wrong. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Not So Crazy

It's like old times. The auteur theory has surfaced again. This is the critical approach, French in origin (*cela va sans dire*) and prominent in the two decades after World War II, which proposed that the director is the true author of a film, that his or her style determines its quality, that such elements as acting, dialogue, and thematic gravity are at most secondary. For the past twenty years or so, that critical view has been buried in a subsequent avalanche of quite different theories, again mostly French in origin—structuralism, semiology, deconstruction, feminism, and others. But a recent film program at the Public Theater in New York took us back to *auteurisme.*

The occasion was a bill devoted to one of that school's favorite directors, Joseph H. Lewis, and to its favorite Lewis work, **Gun Crazy** (Warner Bros.). It was made in 1949 and, ever since, has been stoutly promoted by some as an ignored masterpiece. Its reappearance has brought forth considerable comment, including a paean by Jay Cocks and Martin Scorsese. This revival, which will probably cause ripples elsewhere, makes the auteur view visible again.

I'm glad of it. It reminds us all, including non-auteurists like myself, that there are such things in a critic as a passion for films, a belief in their pleasure and their artistic importance. Foolish as auteurists' claims could be, nothing ever motivated them except that passion. With the latter-day theoretical critics, passion is apparently inappropriate. We usually feel that they write because Professor A wants his dean to think him up to date or because Professors B and C are contesting for the title of the American Christian Metz or because Professors D to K want to redress history's injustices to women, blacks, Asians, homosexuals, and others by exposing the prejudice and the white male heterosexual viewpoint in past and current films. Often these critiques are, under one sun or another, admirable, but they don't have much to do directly with film passion and pleasure.

Well, what *is* this film *Gun Crazy* that all our auteurist swains commend it? A perfect example for them, that's what. Its interest is all in its cinematics—its direction, editing, cinematography. The story is a down-and-dirty film noir saga based on a *Saturday Evening Post* story by Mackinlay Kantor, once a best-selling novelist, who co-wrote the screenplay with Millard Kaufman. According to several sources, Kaufman was a front for Dalton Trumbo, then under a HUAC blight. This last is a surprise because Trumbo was a good screenwriter, and the very worst element in this film is its wooden dialogue.

The story is patently derived from the actual Bonnie and Clyde chronicle. And after *Bonnie and Clyde* appeared in 1967, it became auteur-chic to say that Lewis's overlooked version was better than Arthur Penn's big hit. This, in the view of one who didn't care much for *Bonnie and Clyde,* is mere cognoscenti snobbism. Still, *Gun Crazy* has its strengths.

Not in the acting. John Dall and Peggy Cummins are at best passable and are often foolishly strained. Within the restrictions of the period, the screenplay tries to imply strong sexual themes: the pistol as phallus, Cummins as sexually aroused by robbing and killing, Dall a skilled sharpshooter who is seduced into using his talent in crime (a woman teaches him the complete use of his phallus), etc. She has been doing trick shooting in a carnival; he has been doing very little. They hook up and run off together. (One touch that seems quaint today: they stop at a Justice of the Peace en route.) They begin their crime career moderately and get worse as they go. All of this should seem like heat rising, steam filtering through the cracks. Dall and Cummins are simply not up to it.

It's Lewis's picture. Born in 1910, he entered films at 17, was an editor, a designer of main titles (the first credits we see), a second unit director, and at last the director of a string of pop pictures—Westerns, horror, crime, costume. By 1949 he was well flexed, and with Russell Harlan's black-and-white camera, he rose to his opportunity.

Concede that he uses a device now wearily dated, the montage transition—one stickup dissolving into another, one police broadcast into another, newspaper headlines swooping into view. Concede too the obvious bows to budget restraints—the couple's visit to a city depicted by reflected traffic in a shop window, a posse at the end that consists of two men and an off-screen voice. Otherwise, it's virtuoso direction all the way.

The most celebrated sequence is the bank robbery. The camera is in the back seat of the couple's car, and it stays there as Dall goes into the bank to do the job, as Cummins gets out of the car to flirt with a cop and then to coldcock him with a pistol when Dall comes running out with the loot. (Godard, author of a comparable se-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

An Angel at My Table. *A New Zealand woman, Jane Campion, filmed the autobiography of another New Zealand woman, the writer Janet Frame. The childhood section is best, but all of it is direct, open, humane.(Reviewed 6/3/91)* **The Comfort of Strangers.** *An Eros-Thanatos story, set in Venice. Excellently acted and directed. Harold Pinter's screenplay, from Ian McEwan's novel, is imperfect but gripping.(4/29/91)* **Truly, Madly, Deeply.** *Juliet Stevenson and others are first-rate in this somewhat slushy screenplay about a bereaved woman in London today.(5/27/91)* **Truth or Dare.** *A slickly made documentary about Madonna that tells you more about her than you wanted to know. But telling too much is itself part of the story.(6/10/91)* **—SK**

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quence in *Breathless*, surely knew *Gun Crazy*.) But there's much besides.

Three examples. The opening shot, under the main titles, is from the inside of a gunshop window looking out into rain-pelted dingy streets at night while a neon hotel sign blinks on and off. Presto, we are in film noir country. Later, in a diner, where the penniless couple have gone for hamburgers—without onions, which would have cost a nickel more—the first shot, past the griddle, down the length of the counter to Dall and Cummins at the end, is like Edward Hopper distilled. At the beginning of the last sequence, in a misty swamp at night, the camera moves through the reeds to pick up the ghostly faces of the fugitive pair as they lie together, as they know and we know that the end is near. Kurosawa wouldn't have been ashamed of that shot.

The texture of the film is self-contradictory. The general intent is ruthless realism, but very little that happens is, in realistic terms, credible. How could this (not very bright) pair possibly have escaped capture as long as they did? How did she and he get the jobs in the meat-packing plant in order to pull off a big job? Especially after their pictures had been in the papers. Etc. But Lewis apparently needed—wanted—a screenplay just sufficiently cogent to let him take off from it.

This view of a script as merely an adequate armature for a director had its origin in the theater. Ever since the Restoration, actor-managers had treated plays—sometimes the classics—merely as opportunities for them to strut their stuff. When the director entered the theater in the late nineteenth century, this alchemy of dross into gold was even more emphasized. David Belasco produced dozens of plays in a long career, but with the exception of *The Merchant of Venice* (and, to stretch a point, *Madame Butterfly* and *The Girl of the Golden West*), none of them is remotely interesting today. Yet the best critics of the day understood that his authors' scripts were only the medium for Belasco's own art, that he rejected the best new plays of his time (Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, Chekhov) because he didn't want to be under obligations to good material.

And when an art came along in which the director is inescapably the prime figure, no matter how important his colleagues, this practice flourished even more completely. It's flatly impossible to take *Gun Crazy* seriously as a whole, but it's not as a whole that it should be seen. Those who saw Belasco's production of *The Governor's Lady* (1912) marveled, not at the play but at what Belasco did with it—the restaurant scene in particular. Whether or not he knew it, Joseph H. Lewis was carrying on the Belasco tradition in a different venue. ●

The homeless: who they are and how to help them.

There But For Fortune

By John J. DiIulio Jr.

I.

From 1972 to 1980, "Downtown" Willie Brown was my close friend. During that time, which for me stretched the life-defining distance from eighth grade to my first year of graduate study, I was one all-purpose set of hands in my father's pizzeria in center city Philadelphia and Willie was the other. For nine years we spent most weekends together, working, talking, and joking, though mostly (as my father frequently and loudly testified) talking and joking.

A black man born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, Willie migrated alone to Philly sometime in the late 1950s. He chose Philadelphia because he'd heard that the city had "lots of good jobs for colored folk." But for years all he could find was unstable "dollar-a-day" labor as a barroom porter. "Nights came," he recounted, "when wasn't nothing between me and skid row but three blocks." When the pizzeria opened, he wandered in and asked for a full-time job "doing whatever needs doing." Lots of other obviously down and out men had wandered in and made the same request, but for some reason my father hired him on the spot, and he soon became an indispensable worker and a friend of the family.

But Willie was surprised and disappointed by what he found in the City of Brotherly Love, a disappointment he often expressed by saying, "Jesus Christ, there ain't no difference from here to there, no difference at all. Y'all have as many bad words for poor and colored folk here as south, maybe more!" On his journey north, he smoked pot, drank too much, and was, as he put it, "taken for crazy by a lot of folk, which a little bit I was and surely am." He also took a detour or two to prison, where he "split some head" to keep from being raped or robbed, and gladly did extra time behind bars for the privilege.

Willie was illiterate, and he knew what that cost him. "Things in this here life be a horse of a different color," he used to say, "if I could make out my letters." I made many attempts to teach him how to read, but they were all in vain. Within an hour of every session, he always managed to transform our tutoring table into an arm-wrestling platform: "A's for 'arm-wrestling,' son, so let's you and me get to it!"

Although he did his best to hide it from me for fear that I might be ashamed of him (and, no doubt, for fear

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Down and Out in America: The Origins of Homelessness
by Peter H. Rossi
(University of Chicago, 260 pp., $15.95, $9.95 paper)

Address Unknown: The Homeless in America
by James D. Wright
(Aldine de Gruyter, 189 pp., $38.95, $15.95 paper)

On the Fringe: The Dispossessed in America
by Henry Miller
(Lexington Books, 198 pp., $18.95)

The Excluded Americans: Homelessness and Housing Policies
by William Tucker
(Regnery Gateway, 389 pp., $24.95)

Out of Bedlam: The Truth About Deinstitutionalization
by Ann Braden Johnson
(Basic Books, 306 pp., $22.95)

Madness in the Streets: How Psychiatry and the Law Abandoned the Mentally Ill
by Rael Jean Isaac and Virginia C. Armat
(Free Press, 436 pp., $24.95)

Under the Safety Net: The Health and Social Welfare of the Homeless in the United States
edited by Philip W. Brickner, et al.
(W. W. Norton, 439 pp., $27.95)

What You Can Do to Help the Homeless
by Thomas L. Kenyon with Justine Blau
(Fireside Books, 123 pp., $18.95, $7.95 paper)

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that I might take his frequent anti-drug sermons less seriously), I knew that he never gave up his "reefer," as he called it, and that he sold a little on the street, and did some small-time pimping, to "get me some nice things before I'm dead enough not to have 'em." On more than one occasion, I covered for him on the job when he was too drunk to work, carted him to the flea-bag hotel room he called home, and put him to bed.

Nobody, including Willie, knew precisely how old he was, but when we celebrated his birthday on April 1, 1980, we called it his 50th. Shortly after that, the pizzeria went under. By then I lived in Cambridge, and within a few years I completely lost track of Willie—until a subfreezing December night in 1988, when I drove through center city Philadelphia after a frenzied bout of Christmas shopping. I saw a man on a streetcorner opposite my car. He was aggressively panhandling; he wasn't wearing a coat; he was shouting what through the distance magnified by my tightly rolled car windows sounded like obscenities; he looked frail and filthy. And he looked vaguely like Willie. I quickly decided that this "homeless person" wasn't him. I made my turn, sped on, and forgot about it.

Reading some of the recent literature on the homeless in America brought that episode back to me, not painlessly. It also persuaded me that, despite the many remaining gaps in our knowledge about the nature, the extent, and the causes of homelessness in the world's most affluent society, and despite the political, legal, administrative, and budgetary impossibility of solving the problem through any single national public policy, there is much that can be done—by individuals, by private organizations, and by governments—to help the homeless, to improve the prospects of the near-homeless, and to prevent as-yet-unborn citizens from becoming homeless. The conventional wisdom about the sources and the scope of homelessness in America is misleading. The mounting hopelessness about solutions is ungrounded.

According to the 1990 report of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, over the last year or so public sentiment toward the homeless has hardened in over half of the nation's cities. But take even a short walk in the shoes of the homeless—men and women, black, white, and brown, young and old, drunk and sober, mentally healthy and mentally ill, families and loners, poor, poorer, and poorest—as James Wright invites us to do in *Address Unknown*, and you will see just how inadequate the new hard-heartedness is. Civic toughness, whether in the form of boot-camp prisons, tightly run shelters, nononsense drug therapies, or work-based welfare programs, has its limits, especially when the social problems at which it's aimed have deep economic roots.

For a start, we must acknowledge two things. First, nobody knows precisely how many homeless people there are in America. Second, this ignorance does not present a major barrier to fashioning effective responses to the situation. Clearly the scale of the problem is relevant, and homelessness is a national poverty problem. But the needs of homeless Americans—for social services and other support—vary greatly, and the economic and other influences that foster homelessness differ from place to place. Innovative national policies might help, but an all-encompassing, "top-down" response to this complex problem is less likely to succeed than an incremental, multilevel approach.

Estimates of the number of homeless in America vary wildly, and disputes over the meaning and measurement of homelessness abound. In *Down and Out in America*, a state-of-the-numbers-game study, Peter Rossi, a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst, makes a simple but important distinction between the "literal homeless" and the "precariously housed." The literal homeless are those who don't have "customary and regular access to a conventional dwelling" (houses, apartments, mobile homes, rented rooms). They live and sleep in places that were not intended for living and sleeping, "including public areas such as bus stations or lobbies, abandoned buildings, dormitory arrangements (as in shelters), cars, vans, trucks, and scrap-metal shacks." The precariously housed are poor people who are about to be evicted, about to be thrown out of the house by relatives, can't meet the raised rent, and so on.

Many advocates for the homeless maintain that between 1.5 and 3 million Americans are, on any given night, literally homeless. This range has been enshrined by print and broadcast journalists, but it is almost certainly a gross overestimate. Every credible study puts the number of literally homeless in America at half a million or under. A study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1984 estimated the number of literally homeless to be between 250,000 and 300,000. The HUD report did not deny the methodological difficulties involved in arriving at reliable estimates, and even allowed for a more elastic range of between 192,000 and 586,000.

Still, advocates for the homeless howled that the HUD study was nothing but a pseudoscientific propaganda weapon in the Reagan administration's "war against the poor." Two years later, however, a report prepared for the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) by Richard Freeman and Brian Hall, two independent and highly respected Harvard scholars, reanalyzed the HUD data and estimated that in 1986, 350,000 Americans were literally homeless. In 1988 a careful study by the Urban Institute put the number between 567,000 and 600,000, noting that, if anything, the estimate erred on the high side. The federal government has based its working numbers on the Urban Institute's estimates. Given "available information and reasonable assumptions," Rossi concludes, "the most believable national estimate is that at least 300,000 people are homeless each night in this country, and possibly as many as 400,000 to 500,000 if one accepts growth rates in the past few years of between 10 percent and 20 percent." He estimates that another 4 to 7 million Americans are so poor as to be precariously housed.

Presumably, advocates for the homeless are interested in confronting the problem, not in prolonging tedious, quasi-academic, and often politicized debates about the numbers, the main effect of which is to delay action. The real questions that need addressing are not quantitative. They have to do with the identity of these unfortunates, and with the reasons for their condition. Who are the homeless? Why are they homeless? What, if anything, can be done about their plight?

According to the profile of the urban homeless assembled in the 1990 report of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 51 percent are single men, 34 percent are families with children, 12 percent are single women, and 3 percent are "unaccompanied youth." The racial composition of this extremely impoverished population is predictably skewed: 46 percent black, 34 percent white, 15 percent Hispanic. And, not surprising, the incidence of life-destroying problems among the homeless is far higher than in the general population: 38 percent are substance abusers, 28 percent are mentally ill, 76 percent have been chronically unemployed.

The reigning view is that homelessness is primarily a poverty problem. Rossi, Wright, and several other leading analysts argue that a straightforward housing supply and demand disparity accounts for most of the people on the street. The crux of the problem, Wright maintains, has been "too many poor chasing too few affordable housing units." He offers

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lots of statistical evidence to support his case, typified by the following Philadelphia story:

> Between 1978 and 1982, the number of low-income rental units in that city fell by 26 percent, from about 211,000 units to 157,000. During that same period, the size of Philadelphia's poverty population rose from 516,000 to 708,000, an increase of 37 percent. Simple division shows that in the late 1970s, there were 2.4 poor people in Philadelphia for each available low-income unit. Four years later, there were 4.5 poor people per available unit. The housing squeeze faced by Philadelphia's poor is unmistakable. That there is nowhere else to go (but the streets) is not an excuse. It has become an inescapable fact of the political economy of Philadelphia and many other cities.

But as purely quantitative analyses of social problems usually are, this portrait of the problem is much too simple. Serious critics of this view have raised at least three important questions, the answers to which reveal a considerably more complicated situation. First, if homelessness in America is fundamentally a poverty problem, then how come the problem worsened in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the fraction of American citizens living in poverty shrank from its 1960s level? Second, is the problem a lack of affordable housing caused by Reagan-era cutbacks in public assistance, as the most polemical versions of the position have it? Or have local government policies had the perverse if unintended effect of restricting the stock of low-income units, inducing some of the extremely poor to become homeless? And third, how can homelessness be viewed mainly as a poverty problem when so many of the homeless are physically debilitated, mentally ill, or both?

Some advocates for the homeless simply deny that there are proportionately fewer poor Americans today than there were in 1965, when the War on Poverty was launched. By every credible measure, in the early 1980s the fraction of Americans living in poverty increased. But the fact is that the poverty population has shrunk over the last quarter century. (The Census Bureau overstates the total number of poor because it undercounts the incomes and assets of low-income households.) That's not to say that the story has been one of unmitigated improvement. As many crossed the poverty line, those Americans who remained extremely poor became more concentrated than ever before in the nation's economically depressed inner cities. In a series of reports for the National League of Cities, Mark Hughes, a professor of public affairs at Princeton, has documented this trend and aptly characterized the nation's post-War-on-Poverty inner cities as pockets of "isolated deprivation." Many of those who became homeless in the 1970s and early 1980s, perhaps most of them, were recruited from these dispossessed metropolitan heartlands on the economic fringe of urban communities that were themselves on the economic fringe.

Today's homeless Americans, according to Henry Miller, a professor of social welfare at Berkeley, are the direct socioeconomic descendants of the men, women, and children who throughout history have fallen "outside the pale of convention by virtue of a feeble attachment to hearth and home"—beggars and vagrants, Forty-Niners and hoboes, Hoovervillites and Joads. Like Rossi and Wright, Miller, in *On the Fringe*, juggles relevant numbers to argue that homelessness is essentially a poverty problem, concluding dryly that "people of means, with rare and trivial exceptions, do not become homeless." But he usefully complicates the voguish distinction between the "old homeless" and the "new homeless" that underlies most of the purely economic arguments about the causes and cures of homelessness.

This distinction is based on a demographically demonstrable shift. Today's homeless are mainly minority adults in their early to mid-30s with some formal education beyond grade school. Yesterday's homeless consisted mainly of uneducated older white men living on skid row. Among today's homeless are large numbers of female-headed families without any substance abuse problems. The vast majority of yesterday's homeless were broken-down alcoholic men. The new homeless are virtually shut out of a high-tech economy in which menial jobs requiring little mental or physical dexterity are scarce and do not pay a living wage. Within walking distance of most skid row flophouses, the old homeless had their labor market niche in low-but-livable-wage work such as muscling truck cargo or day-labor construction jobs. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the mechanization of such work (forklifts, containerized shipping), and the unionization of the construction and stevedore industries, obliterated this casual labor market in urban areas.

As Rossi observes, these developments put both the old homeless and skid row "out of business." Or, as Wright explains, "The historical means to avoid literal homelessness have been largely removed from the urban scene. . . . The income function of casual labor has been replaced by scavenging from trash cans and by panhandling. The organized social system of skid row, in short, has been replaced by the disorganized existence of homelessness."

Miller accepts that today's homeless differ demographically from yesterday's, and he recognizes that recent changes in the labor market have given rise to "a new generation of vagrant and homeless." But viewing homeless Americans of the 1980s in the broad sweep of Western history, he concludes that the "homeless of today are not very much different from those of yesteryear." Economically the "new homeless" are fundamentally what the homeless have always been: namely, "on the extreme edge of the labor force." Behaviorally Miller finds as many similarities as differences between the inhabitants of skid row and the dispossessed ghetto youth, both male and female, who came after them.

Most timely of all is Miller's recitation of the underlying similarities between how society-at-large responds to the homeless of today and how it responded to the wandering poor of earlier eras. Then as now, the basic attitude "has been harsh, unsympathetic, and—all too often—downright draconian in its severity." Yesterday's homeless person was

> whipped, branded, jailed, transported, indentured, enslaved, or executed; in less harsh times, he was scorned, shunned, harassed, or pushed out of the community. Today, the vilification of the homeless is couched in a language of surface neutrality: he or she is "mentally ill," "alcoholic," "drug-addicted," "pauperized."

But actions speak more truly than words, and, as Miller suggests, while overall poverty levels in the United States have declined, our society has been content to let its inner-city streets become one more chapter in the story of the other America.

II.

But that story is not quite the black and white tale that is commonly told. The chief villain is typically Ronald Reagan, during whose administration certain kinds of federal assistance for low-income housing declined dramatically. The basic plot is as follows. Between 1980 and 1988, the Reagan administration cut budget authority for all federal housing assistance programs by 82 percent, from $32 billion to $5.7 billion, and gutted Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Section 8 provided low-income renters with housing certificates that guaranteed landlords the difference between a tenant's rent and 30 percent of his income. It was not established as an entitlement program; certificates were issued on an "as available" basis involving

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cumbersome applications procedures. Thus it was easy for the administration to slash the number of new certificates issued from 110,000 in 1981 to 10,000 in 1988.

At the same time, the Reagan administration did nothing to expand the stock of public housing. From 1977 to 1981 the federal government authorized some 215,000 new public housing units, but only 44,000 were authorized from 1982 to 1988. As a direct result of these Reagan cutbacks, in the 1980s thousands of low-income people who in the 1970s would have been kept from the streets by federal assistance joined the ranks of the homeless.

That much is true, but it's only half of the story. A closer look at the record reveals that the Reagan administration refocused, rather than razed, the federal government's housing assistance policies, and did so as part of a broader effort to recast federal anti-poverty measures in accordance with (like them or not) conservative principles.

For starters, we need to remind ourselves that a federal dollar authorized for tomorrow is not a federal dollar spent today. The Reagan administration did cut *authorized* spending (that is, commitments to spend money at some future date) for federal housing assistance by 82 percent, but between 1980 and 1988 total outlays on housing subsidies of low-income households actually more than doubled, from $5.7 billion to $13.8 billion, and the total number of low-income households receiving federal housing subsidies increased from an estimated 3.3 million to 4.4 million.

A similar but slightly more complicated reality lies behind the saga of Section 8 certificates. The Ford and Carter administrations were committed to expanding the nation's public housing stock, and they used the Section 8 program to do it. As William Tucker has documented in *The Excluded Americans*, during those years developers who agreed to construct new low-income housing units received blocs of Section 8 certificates sufficient to fill their entire buildings. (The rest of the certificates were set aside for tenants in existing housing, and for the "substantial and moderate rehabilitation" of existing housing.)

Section 8 certificates thus put money directly in the pockets of developers rather than in the pockets of the poor. Although Section 8 awards had always gone to developers with good political connections, during the Reagan years the program became a political cesspool in which well-connected Republicans received huge consulting fees to influence the high-ranking HUD officials responsible for awarding the certificates.

The Reagan administration, however, had never endorsed the basic idea behind the Section 8 program, namely that the nation's supply of low-income housing needed to be expanded. In 1982, in *The Report of the President's Commission on Housing*, the administration declared that, rather than go on building public housing, federal housing policy should put more income directly in the hands of the needy. In keeping with that declaration, it introduced a housing voucher program in 1984. The vouchers were established as five-year rent supplements handed directly to low-income tenants. Vouchers cost $4,500 a year, as opposed to $9,000 a year for a new unit of public housing. Between 1984 and 1988, although the administration issued only 121,000 new Section 8 certificates (fewer than were issued by the Carter administration in 1979 alone), it issued 202,000 housing vouchers.

Finally, although the Reagan administration did reverse plans for future federal public housing construction, new

Maidens, Martinis, Midnight Hours

John Huston: "I have been obliged to abandon
the ideal life, *martinis, maidens, and the midnight*
hours, for a lung machine." As long as this angel
breathes, I'm alive. A poor exchange, for maidens
whose forms were heaven-sent, for a potent martini's
cloud of smoke calling the gods to descend,

as they do—in Fragonard's sweetly indecent
La Chemise Enlevée, how attentive the angel
is, hovering to lift the gown from a maiden's
dreamy form—though when they will, they abandon
us, power by power. Day by day, the midnight
oases of singing maidens and stirred martinis

recede. Stevens: "Even a *single* martini
would be a disaster, but we might condescend
to try their lemonade." I have abandoned
all hope of stronger proof that angels
will come to the door at my lightest knock. By midnight
I'm asleep, watched over by institutional maidens,

the Sisters who represent a standard made-in-
heaven policy: sign here and abandon
all loopholes (the heaven revolved of martinis
and maidens) to be safely within the fold when midnight
strikes, clanging its doors for your descent.
I still recall (though now I answer only the Angelus)

how in the *Departure from Cythera* Watteau's angels
boil like a cloud of vapor—rising or descending?—
above the waiting boat. Ladies who were maidens
when they arrived, having so completely abandoned
themselves, glow supernally, like Simone Martini's
lost portrait of Petrarch's Laura, like a midnight

sun . . . but enough (surely?) from these old midnight
ramblers with their passé views (how "maiden"
smells of its courtly, detumescing descent!),
wise guys who thought they'd covered the angles
(like Sherwood Anderson who swallowed the olive in his martini,
and the toothpick), these stoics, God-abandoned,

who believe the angels will sing if they abandon
midnight gloom for calm, while the god descends
as a maiden, *La Source*, pouring a pitcher of martinis.

ROBERT HAHN

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units of public housing increased faster in the Reagan years than they did in the 1970s. From 1977 to 1980, for example, about 41,000 new units became available, an average of 10,250 units each year. But from 1981 to 1988, some 165,000 new units came on line, an average of 20,625 a year.

Of course, the Reagan administration deserves no credit for the expansion in new public housing units that occurred on its watch. (There are still some public housing units in the pipeline from the Ford administration.) And no one can accuse Reagan of making HUD, under the stewardship of the model anti-public servant Samuel Pierce, into a bastion of progressive thought and pragmatic action aimed at America's poverty problems. Still, despite the large cutbacks in authorizations, the Reagan years were, in Tucker's words, "actually boom years for public housing," a fact that strongly undercuts the view that a slackened federal effort in public housing is the main cause of homelessness. As current HUD deputy Anna Kondratas writes in a forthcoming issue of *American Psychologist*, "Housing assistance spending actually rose every year during the 1980s," and more affordable housing has been lost to "urban renewal, inflation-driven speculation, tax policy, and other such phenomena than to any putative federal budget cuts."

In any case, merely pointing to failures in federal public housing policy doesn't begin to account for the full dimensions of the problem, as Thomas Main showed three years ago. (Main, I must note, is a doctoral candidate writing his dissertation at Princeton under my supervision.) He reported that between 1979 and 1983 the number of public housing units in New York City actually increased by 72,000 to 1.25 million, but not enough to keep pace with the increase in the number of extremely poor inner-city residents looking for such units. He argued that the gap could have been closed by dividing up old public housing units, renovating abandoned buildings, and creating other accommodations of inferior quality that would have been better than a one-way ticket to the streets.

But this demand for low-income housing was never met, he concluded, "because housing regulations in New York (and some other cities) made it difficult for the market to adjust." So difficult, in fact, that when the city offered landlords a "bonus" of $9,700 to put up homeless families, there were few takers, since "participating landlords would have had to spend more than the bonus to bring their buildings up to the required standard." The pivotal role of local housing regulations, as opposed to federal government cutbacks, in fostering homelessness also emerges in a recent study by Tucker that argues that, other things being equal, housing regulations are a major cause of homelessness. Housing shortages, including shortages of low-income housing, are largely "a local problem created by local regulation, which is the work of municipal governments."

Still more evidence that homelessness is not merely a function of a federally induced lack of affordable housing comes from those who argue that local government policies themselves have, in the words of economist Randall Filer, "caused much of the problem by creating powerful incentives for poor families to become homeless." In an article in the new magazine *NY*, Filer reveals that though the rate of homelessness among single people in New York City is only about one-third that in other major cities, the rate of homelessness among families (mainly single women and their children) in the city is nearly twice as high. In essence, he argues convincingly that, relative to other cities, New York's housing and social welfare policies make homelessness pay for poor families, but not for poor singles.

In contrast to homeless families in other jurisdictions, for example, New York's homeless families are more likely than not to receive food stamps, welfare payments, and other government support. And compared with poor families in New York who remain precariously housed with relatives or have pieced together other private arrangements, poor families who declare themselves to be homeless and enter the city's shelter system immediately gain priority access to subsidized housing and increased disposable cash income.

And the perverse incentives do not end there. Once inside the system, pregnant women (and new mothers) receive priority over other homeless women for permanent placement in subsidized housing, and they are guaranteed temporary placement in a private room or hotel. Thus, notes Filer, there is "an active street market in pregnant women's urine, bought by non-pregnant women who wish to secure" these benefits, and "the city's policies may also encourage some women to bear children they cannot support."

During the 1980s advocates for the homeless and most analysts rejected such "supply-creates-demand" arguments as so much conservative claptrap. They can no more. Indeed, last October that very thesis was argued by David Dinkins, who was quoted in *The New York Times* explaining a spike in the demand for spots in his city's welfare hotels this way: "Unintentionally, an incentive for people to use welfare hotels has been created. Families are frequently entering our city shelter system in order to find an apartment. We do not want doubled-up families to make themselves homeless in order to find an apartment."

III.

It is misleading, therefore, to diagnose homelessness in America as merely a straightforward problem of "too many poor chasing too few affordable housing units." Much the same can be said of the conventional view that homelessness in America has grown largely as a result of the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. The effects of deinstitutionalization in fostering homelessness have been greatly exaggerated. In 1955 the population of state hospitals for the mentally ill peaked at 559,000; today it stands at about 100,000. In *Out of Bedlam*, Ann Braden Johnson, a director of mental health services for women in New York City's jail system, explains that efforts to depopulate state mental hospitals began in the 1940s, not, as is commonly believed, in the 1960s. The alluring premise of deinstitutionalization was that treating the mentally ill in small, community-based mental health centers, instead of large, bureaucratic state mental institutions, would improve treatment, preserve dignity, and save money.

In the 1960s and early 1970s three developments spurred the deinstitutionalization movement. First, the pharmaceutical industry aggressively marketed the "wonder drug" Thorazine and other psychotropic medications that, as Johnson puts it, made mental patients "easier to handle," and (or so it was predicted) better candidates for community-based treatment. Second, leaders of organized psychiatry articulated and enforced within their ranks a community mental health orthodoxy. In Johnson's unforgiving but not unpersuasive telling, the psychiatry profession "had turned its back on the chronic patients in the mental hospitals before."

Third, and of greatest continuing significance, federal judges, beginning with the Lessard decision in 1972, issued rulings that made it impossible to confine the mentally ill against their will unless they were found by a court of law to be immediately "dangerous" to themselves or others. The judges also mandated that any forced treatment of the mentally ill be administered in the least restrictive setting possible. On the platform provid-

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ed by these decisions, ideologically driven civil liberties lawyers and financially-driven community mental health operators have lobbied effectively against any measures that might check deinstitutionalization.

It is not surprising that most of the patients discharged from mental institutions in the 1960s and early 1970s did not find adequate treatment in the community, because the blueprints for such treatment were never really drafted. No level of government did much to install the needed network of community mental health centers, or to realize in some other way the ideal of individualized treatment for the mentally ill. Failed by organized psychiatry and public administration, the deinstitutionalized were also failed by laboratory science as the curative properties of many psychotropic drugs proved to be little more than sales hype. Worst of all, however, they were failed by the communities that received them. As Oliver Sachs has observed, in "a large, bustling, indifferent city, such as New York," deinstitutionalization had no chance of success.

But how much did the folly of deinstitutionalization really contribute to the tragedy of homelessness? According to Rael Jean Isaac and Virginia C. Armat in *Madness in the Streets*, the conventional answer is the right one: lots, though they're not specific about how many of today's homeless are yesterday's deinstitutionalized. Reliable estimates don't exist, but it's certain that a more than negligible fraction of the discharged mental patients of the 1960s and early 1970s became homeless. Still, given that today's homeless are mainly young adults, and given that deinstitutionalization was implemented over a decade ago, the case against understanding homelessness in the 1980s as "madness in the streets" seems quite strong, as Johnson persuasively argues. By the mid-1970s, nearly everyone slated to be deinstitutionalized already had been. Isaac and Armat counter that we must take note of "the accumulation of helpless people released in successive waves as hospitals emptied," and count as victims of deinstitutionalization "the 'uninstitutionalized' population on the street—the chronically mentally ill young people who years ago would have gone to state mental hospitals."

Their book is excellent in many ways, not least of all in documenting the need to make involuntary commitment of the severely mentally ill easier. But without suspending logic and ignoring the best available statistics, it is impossible to find deinstitutionalization among the leading causes of contemporary homelessness. In the NBER study, for example, Freeman and Hall reported that only 1 percent of their sample had come to the streets or shelters directly from mental hospitals. And Wright reported that in a survey of 30,000 homeless people in sixteen cities, recent release from a mental institution "was judged the single most important reason for the homelessness of a mere 2 percent and a major factor for an additional 4 percent."

Still, if laws were changed to make involuntary institutionalization of the severely mentally ill easier, as Isaac and Armat strongly recommend, some fraction of today's mentally ill homeless population would no longer be exposed to the dangers of life on the streets. Unfortunately, no data exist to tell us what proportion of the current homeless population might be affected by such changes. It is worth noting, however, that in the survey reported by Wright, chronic mental illness was the chief reason for the homelessness of 16 percent of the re-

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spondents and a secondary factor for another 18 percent.

IV.

Confronting the problem of the mentally ill clearly will have to play a part in solutions to homelessness. *Under the Safety Net* describes one program based on the acknowledgment of the dispiriting fact that the incidence of serious mental and physical health problems (such as AIDS, alcoholism, substance abuse, tuberculosis, and hypertension) among homeless Americans is indeed far higher than in the population at large. Making no pretense to solving the fundamental economic problems of the homeless (decent jobs, adequate housing), the Health Care for the Homeless Program (HCHP) addressed itself forthrightly to the vital services needs of unhoused men, women, and children. Supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which invested $25 million in the program in 1983, HCHP was "a five-year experiment in community coalition building and health care innovation" that became an umbrella for programs in nineteen big cities across the nation designed to "provide health care and help in arranging social services—e.g., drug and alcohol treatment programs, public assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, and other entitlements—to otherwise unserved homeless people." No systematic evaluation of HCHP's effectiveness in helping the homeless has been conducted, but the available evidence is encouraging, and similar (though much smaller-scale) programs are now under way.

And meaningful private efforts to help the homeless need not be the sole province of big foundations and other established organizations. *What You Can Do to Help the Homeless*, a 123-page pamphlet produced by the National Coalition to End Homelessness, contains concise practical advice (and gentle moral exhortation) about how one can organize a food drive, tutor homeless children, give special help to battered women, and much more.

Still, merely raising social consciousness (or social guilt) will not raise a roof over the heads of the homeless. Private individuals, advocacy groups, charities, churches, and foundations have been unable to make more than an inspiring dent in the problem. The time has come for federal, state, and local governments to focus their energies on the homeless. What's needed is a limited, multifront war on poverty in which each level of government contributes what it can, rather than trading accusations about passing the buck; too much time has been wasted with the states charging that the federal government has burdened them with the problem, and cities, burdened in their turn, claiming they can't do it alone.

Given the multiple sources of homelessness, efforts to address the problem will necessarily be a hybrid array of economic assistance and social services, federal leadership and local initiative, social innovation and judicial reform. In the 1980s, as the problem grew worse, political debates over whose responsibility it was to help the homeless grew louder, not more constructive, and debates over the extent and causes of homelessness became more esoteric, not more useful. The simple lesson for the 1990s is that such debates do not put a roof over anyone's head. Although government did not create, and cannot cure, all aspects of the problem, it can help to solve them. Let's start with the feds.

Without delay both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue should meet to expand funding for the network of programs operated under the Stewart B. McKinney Homelessness Act of 1987. In fiscal year 1990 the McKinney Act funneled some $667 million in aid to the homeless through the Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and HUD. Between 1987 and 1991, most McKinney Act programs provided supplemental funding for ongoing federal initiatives to accelerate or upgrade health care services to the poor. It also established the Health Services for the Homeless program (known formally as Section 340 of the Public Health Service Act). Hundreds of thousands of homeless persons across the country have been served by McKinney-funded health and social services programs. On its way out of the White House, the Reagan administration requested only 15 million FY 1990 McKinney dollars for health programs, a funding level that would have resulted in the termination of services to 165,000 homeless men, women, and children who had just gained access to health care. But the Bush administration increased that to $63 million and preserved health care for the homeless.

Federal agencies that administer McKinney-funded programs are now engaged in formal evaluations of the act's effectiveness. To date, over a third of all McKinney dollars have gone for housing assistance programs administered by HUD through municipalities and nonprofit organizations. Surely it's worth assessing these and other McKinney programs to see whether they have efficiently delivered help to the greatest possible number of homeless citizens. Based on the existing evidence, however, it is pretty clear that McKinney programs represent federal anti-poverty policy at its best, programs in which "throwing money at the problem" works. Throw more.

While expanding the McKinney safety net, federal policy-makers should also work to fulfill the broader promises of the National Affordable Housing Act, adopted last November with strong bipartisan support as the first major piece of federal housing legislation since the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Key provisions of the act are intended to give state and local governments and community-based nonprofit organizations greater discretion in using federal funds to address the problems of affordable housing and homelessness. Unfortunately, this potentially historic legislation is now in danger of becoming just another pawn of Washington partisan in-fighting.

The act, which is administered by HUD, encompasses such programs as HOME, an affordable housing block grant program for states and cities; Shelter Plus Care, which combines two existing housing programs with a new five-year rental assistance program for homeless people who are mentally ill, substance abusers, or in dire need of other social services (recipients match federal contributions dollar for dollar); and HUD Secretary Jack Kemp's pet project, HOPE, a home ownership program for low-income residents of public housing.

But as interpreted by the Bush administration, the act does not support an expansion in the supply of public housing; indeed, the administration has shifted some public housing construction funds into the HOME block grant. Democrats in Congress have complained bitterly about how HUD is steering the act's implementation, accusing it of selling off public housing, selling out the poor, and failing to pour federal funds into the construction of badly needed new public housing units.

In a recent *Washington Post* op-ed piece, Kemp retorted that the Democrats "cling to programs that transfer income, not assets, to the poor" and give low-income families "just enough aid to lock them in perpetual dependence and despair, but never the incentives or the property needed to achieve full economic freedom." The HOME program, he asserted,

> would help 37,000 families within eighteen months, compared to only 7,000 units of public housing that would be built five years from now under current law. When public housing has more than 100,000 va-

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cant units that now go unused by anyone except drug dealers, it is hard to justify building more.

Kemp, who virtually everyone agrees has his heart (if not his HUD) in the right place on poverty issues, is smart enough to know that the mere existence of vacant, drug-infested public housing units no more argues against producing new units than the existence of auto junkyards argues against producing new cars. For their part, congressional Democrats should stop arguing that simply constructing more units nationwide at federal expense is the answer. It's not.

Both the administration and its congressional critics should take the federalism logic of the National Affordable Housing Act seriously enough to recognize that some jurisdictions probably do need enhanced federal support for more public housing units, other jurisdictions probably don't; and the need for new units will vary from place to place and across time according to demographic and other changes that are hard to predict but can be estimated. At the same time, the administration needs to be much more practical about the difficulties of implementing long-term solutions to poverty and homelessness such as making public housing tenants into homeowners. A recent article in *National Journal* noted that the bill for "empowerment" at Kemp's showplace, the Kenilworth-Parkside neighborhood in Washington D.C., now stands at $130,000 per apartment (residents must have a job or be in job-training to qualify for one), and many other homeownership projects have been mired in cost overruns and delays. Under the act, balancing such programs as HOME, Shelter Plus Care, and HOPE with new construction where necessary would constitute a winning federal housing policy for the homeless.

Independent of federal initiatives, state governments can do at least two things to combat homelessness. First, they can improve the quality of state-funded total-care institutions for the mentally ill, and pass laws designed to protect the civil rights of the homeless mentally ill against those who, in the name of civil liberties, would sentence mentally incompetent fellow citizens to a life of misery. Making possible the involuntary commitment of the chronically mentally ill would not greatly reduce the total number of homeless, but it would greatly reduce the amount of human suffering compounded by homelessness.

Second, responsible state officials can take greater pains in regulating local shelters. As it now stands, some shelters are clean; others are filthy. Some are violence-ridden; others are not. Some offer basic services and amenities; others do not. Recently, for example, New York's State Department of Social Services investigated conditions inside New York City's shelter system and found numerous violations of state regulations, including overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions that posed a serious risk to homeless women and children. But the state's response was a threat to cut its substantial financial support for the city's shelters, which would only make things worse.

In all such cases, a better response would be for the state to force the offending locality to bring its shelters up to standard. And if elected and appointed state officials prove unable or unwilling to do so, state or federal judges should step in. Court intervention into the administration of public institutions (prisons, schools, mental hospitals) is rarely an unqualified success, but a homeless New Yorker in a public shelter is a worthier object of activist attentions than a criminal New Yorker in a Riker's jail.

Local government officials have never waited for state or federal direction to help the homeless. According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors report, in many localities most funding for homeless assistance programs comes from locally generated revenues rather than from state or federal grants. Even near-broke big cities can learn from each other's experiences with the homeless and do more on at least three fronts. First, on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis, municipal housing codes and regulations need to be reviewed and, where necessary, revised in order to increase the stock of affordable housing and low-income rental units. Given Mayor Dinkins's recent insights on the subject, New York City ought to lead the way. The extensive and expensive safety (as well as aesthetic) standards now written into many urban housing codes have had the effect of regulating out of existence the construction and rental of low-cost conventional dwellings, which is a recipe for homelessness.

Second, rather than passing laws to "evict" the homeless from the streets, for a little money (and lots of disinfectant) local authorities can establish public sanitary stations such as Cincinnati's Mary Magdalene House, where the homeless can use a toilet, grab a shower, wash their clothes, and make phone calls. And even municipalities that are drenched in red ink can afford to be more supportive of the private (often

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church-based) groups that are doing a lot to help the homeless on very scarce funds.

Third, local leaders throughout the country should repeat recent experiments made in Philadelphia, Seattle, Atlanta, and other cities with "self-governing" shelters in which the homeless assume responsibility for everything from preparing meals to keeping the place clean and orderly. Philadelphia's Food For Life shelter, for example, even has some former residents now working on its staff. There is absolutely no reason why public shelters should be horrible places, horribly run. Nobody thinks shelters are an ideal answer. But the lesson of the last decade is that they aren't mere emergency measures either. The time has come to think seriously about how best to maintain them. Many observers believe that empowering the homeless to take charge of shelters serves as a vital first step on the road to their economic and personal recovery. Let's find out.

"Homeless American" is a moral oxymoron, but most of us have yet to understand it that way. As an unspoken moral precept for civic action, "blessed are the poor" has lost its sway. Our civic failure here cannot be measured in the number of public assistance tax dollars spent or withheld, or the amount of pocket change given or kept. All such failures are at once communal and individual, profound moral accidents at that intersection of private interest and public spirit known as citizenship. For several months now I've been searching for Willie Brown, hoping that he's alive and well, and praying that my old friend, if he ever did become homeless, met with better fellow citizens than me. ●

Fierce Menagerie

BY MARY JO SALTER

Wolfwatching
by Ted Hughes

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 72 pp., $14.95)

Ted Hughes, whose oeuvre is so packed with animal poems that one might call his books menageries, opens his thirteenth collection with "A Sparrow Hawk" and closes it with "A Dove." Does the movement from the bird of war to the bird of peace signify an allegorical intention? In the first poem, the hawk embodies violence. It is a weapon in avian form:

> Those eyes in their helmet
> Still wired direct
> To the nuclear core—they alone
>
> Laser the lark-shaped hole
> In the lark's song.

(Hughes, who once anthologized a pocket-sized Emily Dickinson, may have had in mind her equally grotesque "Split the Lark—and you'll find the Music.") But a reader seeking images of peace, or at least of restfulness, in the final poem will find instead

> Porpoises
> Of dove-lust and blood splendour
> With arcs
> And plungings, and spray-slow explosions.

Even when the doves settle on a bough, in the book's concluding lines, they are "Bubbling molten, wobbling heavy / Into one and many." If one wanted to be allegorical and schematic about a book characterized by Hughes himself (in England's *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*) as a "gathering of occasional poems, none written to any conscious larger plan," one might glean the message that peace, among men or within them, is merely the complement of violence.

Violence and cruelty have long been the staple subject of England's poet laureate, and the natural world, especially animals, his primary vehicle. Although those animals may be anthropomorphic—the book-length *Crow* provides the most celebrated example—they are often most successful when refusing to perform as stand-ins for people. If an image can profitably be borrowed from the human world (as in the much-reprinted, unusually light-hearted "A March Calf"), Hughes reaches for it: "Right from the start he is dressed in his best—his blacks and his whites. / Little Lord Fauntleroy . . ." But just as satisfyingly, his dead pig (in the superb early poem "View of a Pig") is like nothing organic at all: "They were going to scald it, / Scald it and scour it like a doorstep." We know better, when we read these lines, than to conclude that "View of a Pig" is really about doorsteps; but such is our self-love that we cannot always believe that an animal poem with a human image or two is really about an animal. If it isn't about *us*, we assume it's about the poet.

To some extent, of course, all poems are about the poet. Hughes the animal poet has always had an animal's indifferent, amoral pleasure in things as they are. In "February 17th," one of the series of captivating poems in *Moortown* about the birthing of various animals on Hughes's farm, he tells of a lamb whose head emerged too early:

> I went
> Two miles for the injection and a razor.
> Sliced the lamb's throat strings, levered
> with a knife
> Between the vertebrae and brought the
> head off
> To stare at its mother . . .

The poem's conclusion, unredemptive, drives the sickening truth home: "And the body lay born, beside the hacked-off head." Alongside the sorrow, it's impossible not to sense Hughes's joy at his own unflinching ability to look nature's heartlessness in the face, as the mother must her lamb. One's own responses to a poet who could look on this scene with even a modicum of joy are, necessarily, mixed too.

Indeed, when we witness another lamb's birth in "Ravens" (it is "born dead, / Twisted like a scarf"), we resist the injustice just as Hughes's child does: " 'Did it cry?' you keep asking, in a three-year-old field-wide / Piercing persistence." And Hughes answers by addressing not only his own offspring (whose birth is, implicitly, a recent and tender memory) but the rest of us innocents:

> "Oh yes," I say, "it cried,"
>
> Though this one was lucky insofar
> As it made the attempt into a warm wind
> And its first day of death was blue and warm
> The magpies gone quiet with domestic
> happiness
> And skylarks not worrying about anything
> And the blackthorn budding confidently
> And the skyline of hills, after millions of
> hard years,
> Sitting soft.

The lulling rhythms, the litanic parallelisms, convey the bittersweet consolations of tragedy. Those skylarks not worrying about anything are not so much fancy-free as incapable of sympathy; they may as well be million-year-old hills.

The advanced age of the universe, a recurrent theme in Hughes, is cause for hope or despair or both. Even when, typically, the despair prevails ("Minute after minute, aeon after aeon, / Nothing lets up or develops," he wrote years ago in

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"Pibroch"), one is nonetheless uplifted by the rare impersonality—which is to say, paradoxically, the sweep—of this poet's vision. The sadness of aging is located not merely in our human selves, or narrower still, in the individual poet's body's decay; that sadness is rooted in the stasis of the world's unending change, the inescapable law of death-before-birth-before-death.

So if Ted Hughes's nature poems are peripherally about Ted Hughes, they are about a person who is, in his impersonality, a bit of an animal himself. Here is a poet who writes about the beasts of the earth (especially birds: thrushes, skylarks, swifts, geese, eagles, curlews, ravens, and vultures) because he has the imagination to see, feel, smell their actuality as few of us ever do. At his best, Hughes reminds us of what Auden wrote of another animal poet: "[D. H.] Lawrence never forgets—indeed this is what he likes most about them—that a plant or an animal has its own kind of existence, which is unlike and uncomprehending of man's."

It's fair to add that Hughes appears at times to prefer animals to people on moral grounds. Seemingly the least soft-hearted of men, he succumbs here and there to a sentimentality whereby the helpless, instinctive brutality of animals shows the deliberate cruelty of humankind in a harsher light. This view of our moral stature relative to animals may have its uses, but being black and white as the March calf, it isn't the best foundation for the subtleties of poetry. There is an unvoiced fallacy at work here; it's as if the animals have consciously chosen their inability to think about their behavior. (If *we* could choose not to notice our cruelties, wouldn't we jump at the chance?) In any case, Hughes's particular strength is descriptive and reportorial; when he grows prescriptive or satirical, he draws on a weaker talent.

Hughes's half-aware ascription of subtle thought and feeling to animals reappears in *Wolfwatching*. Many of the poems are so nattily turned out, and play so layered a music, that one minds the fallacy less than one perhaps should. Whales, for instance, are described as having "the loftiest, spermiest / passions, the most exquisite pleasures," as well as "the most terrible fall." (But these are the least winning lines in the poem; I like the straight description of "their body-tons, echo-chambered.") For the caged London Zoo wolf in the title poem, comparison to humans only adds insult to injury:

> He yawns
>
> Peevishly like an old man and the yawn goes
> Right back into Kensington and there stops
> Floored with gaze. Eyes
> Have worn him away. Children's gazings
> Have tattered him to a lumpish
> Comfort of woolly play-wolf. He's weary.

The real achievement of this poem—which proceeds for some four-and-a-half pages from a fairly inarguable premise, that confining wild animals is unkind—is that we keep reading it. Only a poet of Hughes's exacting and enviable ear—an ear keener to the possibilities of internal rhyme, assonance and consonance than that of most of the more formal poets writing today—could sustain the performance. In this passage, "yawn goes" links with "gaze" and "eyes"; "worn him away" with "weary"; "lumpish" with "comfort." Meanwhile, we're meant to feel imprisoned by, even to yawn at, the poem's length, I assume, just as the wolf's "every frolic / releases a whole flood of new hopelessness."

Another tour de force in this collection, the nine-page, tripartite "The Black Rhino," which Hughes wrote on commission for a conservationist campaign, makes a similarly blameless point: the hunting to near extinction of a beast "whose past is Behemoth, sixty million years printing the strata" is shocking and wrong. What enriches the poem is, once again, more sound and image than message:

> This is the Black Rhino, the elastic boulder,
> coming at a gallop.
> The boulder with a molten core, the animal
> missile,
> Enlarging towards you . . .

We recognize the vocabulary of "A Sparrow Hawk" and "A Dove"—the "nuclear core" gone "molten" now, the animal as weapon. Hughes isn't afraid to repeat himself, and the warlike images succeed especially in the first section of "The Black Rhino," where he hits on an inspired strategy.

Word by word he swells our fear by enlarging the creature that rushes toward us; simultaneously, the rhino "vanishes as he approaches." This animal missile is not merely a representative of his kind, but the very last one left, and "even as you stare / He will have dissolved / Into a gagging stench, in the shimmer." He has been made so real, so menacing, that our relief at his not reaching us is like waking from a nightmare—only to realize the ecological nightmare of his coming extinction.

Elsewhere in *Wolfwatching*, Hughes seeks to know the cost of real weapons. Picking up an anti-war thread that goes back decades, to poems such as "Bayonet Charge," "Six Young Men," "Out," Hughes returns here to the lasting ef-

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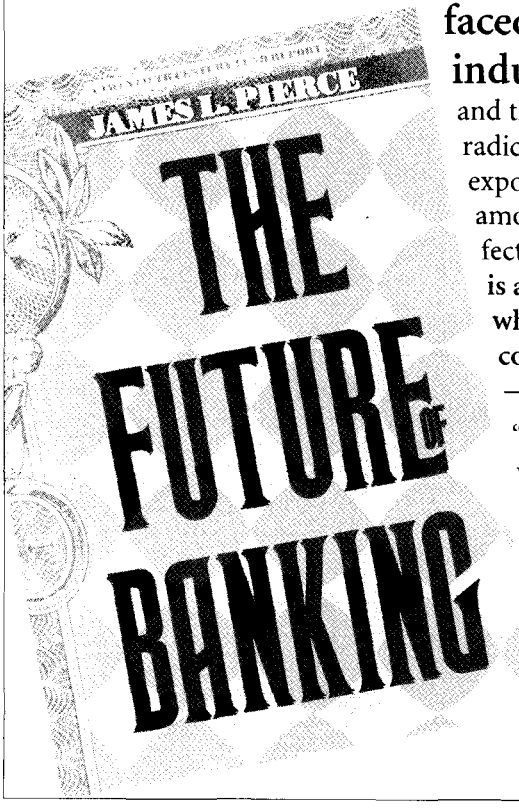

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fects of wounds his father suffered in World War I. Not only his father, in fact; in the elegy "Walt," one of the most affecting poems Hughes has ever written, the poet stands with his father in "the young March corn / Of a perfect field," and thinks of himself

> beside him
> Just the age he'd been when that German
> Took aim with his eye and hit him so hard
> It brought him and his wife down together,
> With all his children one after the other.

The blow's physical immediacy is one with its ever-widening damage. Here is a gratifying conflation of images, much as with the black rhino that vanishes as it approaches:

> "Here," he hazarded.
> "Somewhere about
> here.
> This is where he stopped
> me. I got this far."

As we know from earlier poems—but would guess by the single verb "hazarded"—Hughes's father was psychologically arrested at this moment, and would never recover.

"For the Duration" offers, in its finest image, what would seem to be a sequel. (It precedes "Walt" in this volume; the arrangement of *Wolfwatching* is something odder than haphazard, almost willfully confusing.) The boy Hughes, living with the twinned horror of his father's "day-silence" and screaming nightmares, envisions

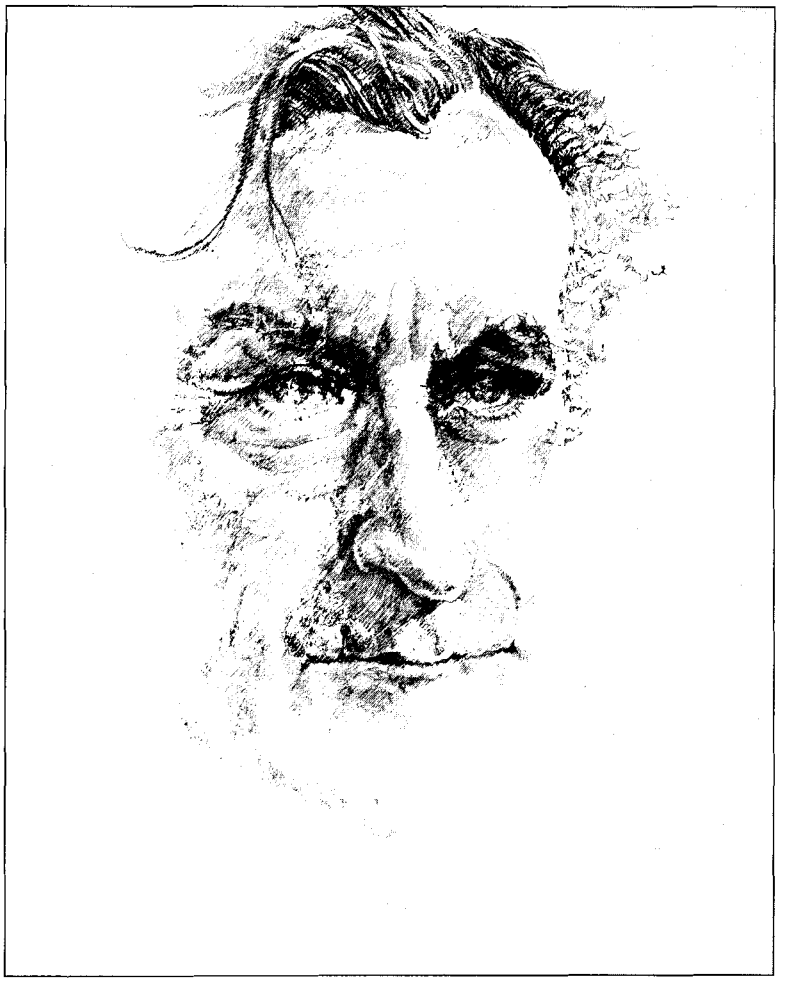
> you climbing again
> Out of the trench, and
> wading back into the
> glare
>
> As if you might still not
> manage to reach us
> And carry us to safety.

In "Source," Hughes sees his father's tragedy wholly from his mother's perspective: "Where did all those tears come from? / . . . He'd won the war." And in "Sacrifice" there is a jolly uncle, evidently a war veteran too, who spends his spare time making escapist artifacts:

> He toiled in his attic after midnight
> Mass-producing toy ducks
> On wooden wheels, that went with clicks.
> Flight! Flight!

But in the poem's final lines, this man who was "Born at the bottom of the heap" rises in his attic to a ghoulish height, a suicide by hanging. The effect on his family is, once again, much the same as if they'd all been shot: "his daughter / Who'd climb up to singsong: 'Supper, Daddy' / Fell back down the stairs to the bottom."

"Sacrifice," like "Walt," is a nearly perfect poem, and it raises the question of how Hughes moves us. The gallery of family portraits in *Wolfwatching* seems indebted to the Robert Lowell of *Life Studies* and *For the Union Dead*. Here we have the most self-exposing (not exactly "confessional") material of Hughes's oeuvre,



TED HUGHES BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

and a technical treatment that suggests Lowell's influence as well. The toy duck quatrain above, for instance, could easily have been written by the Lowell of the late '50s, who had loosened his grip on the reins of meter but not entirely let them go.

In its end-rhymes—one exact, one off—Hughes's stanza works both with and against the formal traditions from which it derives. "Flight! Flight!" rhymes with a much longer line, an incongruity whose surprise value is compounded by the exclamation marks. And of course, coming directly after "clicks," the line "Flight! Flight!" tells us what the clicks really sound like to a desperate man.

But in singling out the duck stanza for praise, one risks misrepresenting Hughes's craft by overstating the lessons learned from Lowell. We sense, from the long history of Hughes's poems about winged things, that to some degree the real, remembered uncle who mass-produced toy ducks serves as a parodic symbol of the poet who makes birds on paper. What's refreshingly unreminiscent of Lowell is that Hughes's poem, while as self-referential as he ever gets, is not at bottom self-centered. Lowell's "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow," to choose the closest analogue, is far more about Lowell's afternoon than about his uncle's death.

To make a less favorable comparison with Lowell (or the Lowell of the *Life Studies* period), Hughes apparently thinks he needn't be in a mostly rhyming, mostly metrical mode or out of it. "Sacrifice" is written entirely in quatrains—a gesture, as in many poems of this book, backward to the greater formality of Hughes's earliest work. In Hughes's own middle period, his stanzas could be so irregular in length and width that they forgot all relation to stanzas; even in *Wolfwatching*, he's occasionally happy to let a sole line stand with space around it at unpatterned intervals. The quatrain I've quoted in "Sacrifice" is the only one among sixteen that has two end-rhymes. In fact, the poem has only one other end-rhyme at all.

While paying acute attention to local aural effects, consciously shaping lines and stanzas by uncodifiable but just laws, Hughes sometimes appears unbothered by questions of a poem's larger consistency. He's hardly alone in this among contemporary poets—and consistency is no automatic virtue in poetry, where a slavishness to regularity can produce mere versifying. One might well argue that by giving us only one fully rhymed quatrain in "Sacrifice," Hughes has fulfilled an artistic necessity for this particular poem: keeping us off-balance. When inconsistencies of form pile up in less successful poems, however, one begins

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to wonder just how calculated they are.

Hughes is probably the most uneven of our best poets, as readers have often noted. Despite its prevailing excellences, *Wolfwatching* betrays some errors of judgment, like titling a poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth" when it doesn't measure up to Wilfred Owen's classic of the same name. There's also a poem called "The Punishment of Iago, Re-Incarnated as Malvolio in the Form of A Macaw," which on repeated readings makes as little sense as its title originally threatened. All I get from it is a gratuitous nastiness: "Gomorrah! Sodom! Your eye squirms on its pin / In its socket of ashes."

The puzzle of Hughes's unevenness is that it can go hand in hand with a troublesome monotony. His poems may be very bad or (more likely) very good, but they are virtually all unpleasant. Favored anthology pieces like "Full Moon and Little Frieda" suggest a poet with more frequent access to tenderness than Hughes actually shows. You can't enjoy Hughes for too long a sitting. After a while, you long for the sweetness of, say, Blake, who left us with songs of innocence to countervail others of experience, or Frost, who could balance the misanthropies of "Provide, Provide" or "Neither Far Out nor In Deep" with celebrations like "The Master Speed" or "Birches." A relentless hardness is not only too much but—paradoxically—too little. In time it loses its edge, and that eye squirming on its pin shocks us as little as a tulip nodding in a field. And yet resolving to be cheerful or funny is rarely a satisfying ploy—which brings us to the most important quality missing in Hughes.

Oh, for a real joke or two! Or even for an irony that is unbitter. Happy humor is so utterly absent in Hughes that we'll settle for a report of someone else's laugh, like the uncle's in "Sacrifice"; "Sound as a golfball. / He'd belt it into the blue." The humor, for Hughes, of God's indifference or cruelty has sometimes produced aggressively unfunny poems, like "Apple Tragedy," which ends "Then Adam smashes a chair on his head / And God says: 'I am well pleased' / And everything goes to hell." So it's a small relief to encounter, in *Wolfwatching*, another Adam poem ("Take What You Want But Pay For It"), which is honestly, miserably stonefaced ("Then God withdrew, horrified / Almost afraid") before offering us a scrap of hope in the form of a singing Eve. No point in asking Hughes to give us more than is in him.

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writes. He has an admirable fierceness that precedes and lingers beyond whatever he chooses to be fierce about. For him the English language is not so much a tool as an arsenal; I think of Seamus Heaney's "Digging," where the pen in the poet's hand is "snug as a gun." Time and again in *Wolfwatching*, it is moving to watch Hughes use his verbal weapons, his clashing and meshing sound clusters, to plead for the kinds of peace we too rarely achieve: a collective clemency toward animals, a grown child's forgiveness for unhappy parents, a soldier's forgetfulness of battle.

MARY JO SALTER is the author of two collections of poems, most recently *Unfinished Painting* (Knopf).

The Survivor's Voice

BY RUTH R. WISSE

From the Old Marketplace by Joseph Buloff translated by Joseph Singer

(Harvard University Press, 344 pp., $19.95)

To whom will Vilnius belong? Lithuanians insist, quite reasonably, that it be the capital of independent Lithuania. Most Russians will try to keep it within the Soviet Union. There are Poles who believe that the city is no less Polish than Warsaw or Krakow. Its origin as a Ukrainian village means that the Ukrainians, too, may want it again someday. But all the while, another claimant has been securing the city, and whoever rules it in the future will have to share his power with—the Jews.

It is true that under German occupation between 1941 and 1943, the Jewish population of 80,000 was extinguished, first herded into ghettos, then systematically taken to their deaths. It is also true that as a result of Soviet policy and local anti-Semitism, few of the 800 Jewish survivors returned to their home after the war, or would wish to set foot in it again. Still, the generations of Jews who fashioned the city that they call Vilna into the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" have ensured through powers of their own that it will, in memory and spirit, forever be also theirs.

Vilna's reputation as the center of Jewish learning was established in the eighteenth century by Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna Gaon, the pre-eminent Talmudic scholar of his age, and the charismatic model of what came to be known as "Lithuanian" or rationally oriented Judaism. And the intellectual vitality of Vilna's academies of learning evolved with the times, so that by 1939 the city was as famed for its contribution to modern secular Jewish culture as it once had been for its seminaries. The Vilna publishing houses printed not only the standard editions of the Talmud, but every kind of intellectual and social expression, from radical pamphlets of the Socialist Bund (which was itself founded in Vilna in 1897) to Yiddish and Hebrew translations of the world's classics. The famed Vilna Teacher's Seminary took responsibility for Jewish elementary and high school education throughout Poland, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, founded in Vilna in 1926, trained the highest level of historians, philologists, and literary scholars.

A description of the cultural ferment of the city between the two world wars reads rather like a fairy tale. How could such an impoverished and politically oppressed population sustain five daily newspapers, over a hundred philanthropic organizations, a network of schools, libraries, sports associations, and clubs? That it did, and how it did, is recorded in the works of its extraordinary literary offspring, who include Moyshe Kulbak, Chaim Grade, and Abraham Sutzkever, the foremost living Jewish poet, whose work is still fueled by the energy of Vilna after forty-three years of life in Tel Aviv.

Now, to the ever expanding Vilna canon, comes an important addition from a fresh and unexpected source. Joseph Buloff was one of the founding members of the Vilna Troupe, an energetic ensemble that set out in the wake of World War I to improve Yiddish theater through the disciplined production of a broad modern repertory. The Troupe performed contemporary Yiddish plays as well as Shakespeare and Molière, traveling to Jewish communities throughout Europe and other parts of the world. Buloff, who was equally at home in musical comedy and serious drama, stayed in America with part of the company after its 1926 tour, and later he ventured out independently on Broadway and in Hollywood. Arthur Miller once called him the finest actor in America.

But now it seems that acting was not Buloff's only talent. When he died in 1985, as old as the century, Buloff left a memoir in Yiddish. *From the Old Marketplace* is a high-spirited account of childhood and youth by a man who had spent so much time in the Yiddish theater that he could hardly separate its rhythm and themes from his own. The book has been translated into English with no loss of verve by Joseph Singer. Those familiar with Yiddish theater will recognize many of its standard settings—beginning with the old marketplace, which stood at the center of Jewish drama as it did of the Jewish economy. Familiar, too, is the overheated atmosphere of the narrative in which fantasy and comic energy beat out the odds against poverty, discrimination, and war. As an actor, Buloff played to the gallery without ever sacrificing the dignity of the person within the costume. He accomplishes a parallel feat in prose.

It is with the struggle over Vilna that this adventure begins:

> As Barve's Son told it, the old marketplace was once a deep, dark forest where the nomadic Slavonic tribes used to gather and in drunken orgies fling their firstborn into burning pyres to appease their terrible thunder god, Perun. They would prance around the flames in a savage chorus and swill a dark, bitter brew out of huge goatskins or bowls fashioned from the scooped-out skulls of the sacrificed children.

Barve's Son is the resident genius who patiently instructs the Jewish market folk in everything they want to know, meanwhile stitching together the historical background for this story of the years between 1904 and 1918. After thirteen centuries of unending strife among all its would-be occupiers, Vilna's population was, at the moment of Barve's telling, "welded into a polyglot, multiracial mélange dedicated to the perpetuation of its ancestral feuds," but splendidly united "in a deep and frank hatred of the Jews":

> The fact that the Jews stemmed from a land not indicated on any local map—along with the theory proposed in the Holy Scriptures that held the Jews to be some sort of relatives of God, His Son, the Holy Mother, and the whole celestial family, which branded them renegade angels transformed by God's wrath into devils who were driven from heaven down to the marketplace—

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was not only accepted by the local population but consolidated the majority opinion that the quicker these same Jews were returned to their native habitat the better it would be for the marketplace and for the whole world. Well aware of the popular viewpoint, the Jews exhibited a remarkable indifference to this contention.

In no hurry to accommodate the wishes of their neighbors for their disappearance, the Jews, who traced their own local tenure back to prehistorical times, preferred to hang on until the Messiah arrives to redeem everyone alike.

The young hero of Buloff's story was equally brazen, or reckless. A true child of his culture, he was convinced that the world was created for his sake, that no danger was beyond the powers of his mind to control. His father's influence had something to do with this. Following a lengthy absence in America, where he was rumored to be romancing a wealthy woman, the father returned to Vilna a "millionaire," confirming for his young son that life can be changed with the suddenness of a stage direction. As a result of its new wealth, the family moved to a better neighborhood, the boy attended a better school, and was harried by a better class of gentile than he had endured in the marketplace.

The Yiddish morality play would never let anyone enjoy such a suspect fortune, and neither, alas, did the father's conscience. Struck down with a lung-disease that the best doctors were powerless to cure, the father lost his money in the attempt to heal himself, and the family was returned to its former home near the marketplace. There, one restless night, mysteriously and all on his own, the father found his own cure in spiritual identification with his pious, deceased father-in-law. He began to pray, and wrapped in his father-in-law's prayer shawl turned into a devout and healthy Jew. (With a characteristic flourish, Buloff adds that at the outbreak of World War I his parents tried to reactivate the lung-disease to keep father out of the army, but futilely: "Once a miracle always a miracle.")

The boy found salvation through a different kind of transforming power. From earliest childhood he discovered that he could wrap himself in the identity of, say, Arkashka the Cossack, by slipping with just the appropriate mock-drunken swagger into his barrage of curses: "Damn your father's liver, guts, sour milk and putrid blood from over, under, and every side!" Although at first this gift of mimicry cost him dearly, he was vindicated during a bloody pogrom when his cursing temporarily confused the Cossacks and made him the savior of the marketplace. Soon after, the same fine art of Cossack cursing convinced auditioners of the circus to hire this mere boy to replace the 45-year-old midget Vaska Sibiriak.

Buloff's childish love of the Cossacks was nothing like Isaac Babel's identification with them, the adolescent fantasy that inspired his masterful tales in *Red Cavalry*. Raised in the cultural no man's land of modernizing Odessa by an assimilating Jewish family, Babel was so dazzled by his ethnic opposites that he apprenticed himself to the Cossacks for an education that proved as ruinous to his morality as it was salutary to his art. (For a time, Babel was attracted not only to violence as a theme in literature, but to service in the CHEKA, the Bolshevik secret police.) But Buloff, in Jewish Vilna, could not sustain the luxury of such flirtations. His identification with the dashing Cossacks was cut short the first time they attacked his fellow Jews of the market. The charlatan did not give up his mimicry, but thereafter he separated himself from the role, and his humanism from their codes of male honor.

We witness the evolution of an actor in a time and place that rewards—or demands—dissembling. The boy's ability to catch people "in the net of his imagination" won him entry into a gentile girl's bedroom, then a place in the gentile high school, then a coveted job as hospital courier, and finally a toehold in the local theater. Young Buloff fashioned his first solo performances from the adventures of a penny-novel hero known as "The Conqueror of Death," one Doctor Chantille Jeantaigne Delacroix, a precursor of comic book heroes, who is always being falsely arrested for his rescue of endangered innocents and forced to make his eleventh hour escape from prison or the gallows.

However instinctively the boy may have reached for this improbable material as the stuff of good entertainment, the older Buloff faces the opposite problem in his memoir. His incredible real life adventure as "the conqueror of death" requires that he treat it as theater lest it strain the probabilities of truth. There he was, for example, in September 1915, a scrawny kid weighing less than eighty pounds, having just escaped back to Vilna after the invading Germans had taken him off and imprisoned him as a Russian captive. The German occupation had wasted no time in imposing "law and order" on the city: six months imprisonment for anyone harboring a flea, thereby endangering public health; four years' imprisonment for anyone failing to surrender bread, butter, cigars, copper, iron, tin or zinc; death penalty for anyone entering or leaving the city; death penalty for anyone harboring a former Russian prisoner. . . .

> All in all, I quickly figured out that for the ten minutes that I had been in the city, I had more than a hundred and thirty years of prison and several death sentences coming to me.
>
> I drew myself up to my fullest height. . . . This colossal penalty hanging over my head evoked a proud feeling of devil-may-care within me. Such a punishment befitted only a criminal of the highest rank, a master criminal next to whom all the forty thieves of the *Arabian Nights* and the sixty legendary Russian bandits were mere amateurs.

Under conditions so insane (and they were about to deteriorate further, when Poland became the hot potato of Germans, Austrians, Imperial Russians, Bolsheviks, and Polish nationalists, not to mention the distant French and English), individual attempts to stay alive proved as fantastic as the adventures of a penny novel, and no more capable of realistic treatment in fiction. Buloff

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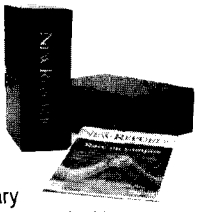

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keeps us at a comic devil-may-care distance from the story he recounts, as if he could not really trust his luck, and certainly not his feelings.

In this respect, his image of himself as a master criminal is more serious than it seems. Because he is defying an evil occupier, the Jewish boy-outlaw is cast as the embodiment of the good. His local crime of trying to stay alive is really a blow for justice. Yet suppose Doctor Delacroix—the Batman of his day—had managed to save himself, but not the innocent people he was dedicated to rescuing? Could he enjoy his own triumph without having secured those he had placed under his protection? Buloff certainly could not. In an epilogue typical of Yiddish culture, he explains that he had conceived this exuberant life's adventure-tale as a work of penance.

The reason for the penance is this man's guilt for having escaped (or perhaps only for having wished to escape) the collective fate. Buloff describes how during one of his frequent theater tours to Brazil he was approached by a former friend from Vilna, Berchik the orphan, who had been one of his childhood trading partners in buttons until the day that he got hold of a violin, and proved to be a prodigy. Berchik's sensational success had provoked Buloff's envy, not only because of the adulation accorded the boy-musician, but for the miracle of music he could actually draw from his instrument. Berchik had been Yosik Buloff's first model of the entertainer. Yet the encounter with the old man in Brazil leaves him cold. When the aged violinist, who now ekes out a living in cabarets, tries to claim from him a couple of buttons that Buloff owes him from one of their childhood games, Buloff brushes him off. Not until he has left Brazil and is ocean-bound for America does he realize what was being asked of him, and how cruel had been his failure to respond:

> I tried to comfort myself. Span the ocean and half globe, run to the old marketplace and find the boy I was and demand buttons from him . . . ? And where was the marketplace? The bloody Holocaust had swept not only the people and the market but even the ground on which it stood off the face of the earth. Not even a trace, a sign had remained. It was as if it had never existed, even in a dream.
>
> That's true, I agreed, but what would have harmed me if, standing there in the dressing room, I had torn some buttons off my jacket and jokingly handed them to him—here, good brother, the payment on my debt. . . .

Is it mere coincidence that the memoir of Sholem Yakov Abramovitch, who was known as Mendele Mocher Sforim, the first master of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature, turns on a similar image of buttons that provokes an identical crisis of guilt? In Abramovitch's memoir *Shloyme, Son of Reb Chaim* (translated into English as *Of Bygone Days*), the distinguished writer is asked by a young boy who comes to his door one stormy night if he may take asylum in the school that Abramovitch directs. The stern writer-educator refuses, but immediately afterward in an agony of remorse he recalls that he himself had once been such a boy. Fingering the buttons of the caftan he wore when he wandered from Lithuania forty years earlier, buttons he had kept as his only souvenir of those miserable years, he determines to write of his youth as a debt to memory, a reminder of his privilege, an apology to those whose humiliation is the other side of his triumph over circumstance. While Abramovitch at the turn of the nineteenth century worried that separation of the individual from the collectivity loosed all bonds of responsibility, Buloff was faced with posthumous separation, the sins of letting go a doomed people.

This well-worked theme of guilt among Jewish survivors forms a strange and troubling counterpoint to the relative absence of guilt among German perpetrators of the Holocaust and their associates among the local populations. The moral distance between Jewish civilization and that of the nations intent on its elimination is confirmed by this discrepancy between, on one hand, the reluctance of the murderers to reexamine their consciences for their brutal sins of commission and, on the other, the obsessive preoccupation of the surviving victims with their sins of omission. Jewish emphasis on mutual responsibility does not stop at the grave, which is why Jewish parents could refer to their sons as their *kaddishlekh*, their "little kaddishes," after the prayer for the dead that would be recited in their memory throughout their children's lifetimes, and why so many thousands of literary memorials have been written by Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust to reanimate what was erased. Once the Jewish child had been taught life's most difficult lesson—that he is his brother's keeper—accountability was not easily unlearned, and the student who was spared the common fate of his people came to distrust his unique good fortune. His conscience demanded the perpetuation of his lost community as a basic obligation.

Perhaps to guard against this danger, Buloff weaves the story of his life into the texture of Yiddish literature, producing less an autobiography than a comic myth of survival. In its attempt to escape its tragic undertow, Yiddish popular culture developed a special brand of humor that mocked the enormity of its own defeat, as if that were proof of its capacity for "greatness." With this book, Buloff joins the company of Moyshe Kulbak and Itsik Manger as a master of this comic genre. For all its emphasis on the singularity of its hero, the author underplays the personal aspects of his development, so that we gain no intimate knowledge of the man at all. The narrative style is that of the professional entertainer who keeps our attention on the act, not on the man behind the greasepaint, and who treats art as an exchange of gifts between actor and audience. Buloff's biography remains to be written. What we have instead is an instant classic about a death-defiant Vilna kid, the product and the emblem of a culture that still stands firm against its nihilistic destroyers.

RUTH R. WISSE is professor of Yiddish literature at McGill University and the author most recently of *A Little Love in Big Manhattan: Two Yiddish Poets* (Harvard University Press).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

class, then treatment is recommended. And even then the treatment team may reject a diagnosis of alcoholism.

T. J. ELLIOTT
Mt. Kisco, New York

The writer is vice president of Longview Associates, a provider of employee assistance programs.

Caliban's curse

To the editors:

In "P.C. B.S." (TRB, May 20) George Will is quoted as sneering at the "transparent Marxist absurdity" of viewing Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an allegory of the "imperialist rape of the Third World." It should be noted that the view of colonization-as-imperialism-as-calamity was commonplace in Shakespeare's time, at least according to Christian moralist (and decidedly non-Marxist) C. S. Lewis. In *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, Mr. Lewis cites Burke, Johnson, and Montaigne on the evils of colonization and concludes that "the best European minds were ashamed of Europe's exploits in America." Whether or not the "imperialistic rape of the Third World" is to be found in the *The Tempest*, the idea is no Marxist mongrel. It has respectable conservative bloodlines.

DAVID DREWER
Dundalk, Maryland

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JERUSALEM DIARIST

Comfort of strangers

I CAME TO ISRAEL, AS DID SOME 250 of Teddy Kollek's other foreign friends, to celebrate the 80th birthday of the mayor of Jerusalem. What these visitors brought him as gifts were contributions to the Jerusalem Foundation, which provides virtually the only money this poor city has to fulfill the moral obligations imposed on it by its rich history: to retrieve its archaeology, protect its religious diversity, enhance its beauty, equalize social services among its many populations, nourish the arts in an atmosphere otherwise inclined to dogma, and sustain the warrant of King David, who made this place the capital of the Jewish people just five years short of three millennia ago. No sooner had I arrived from the airport than I returned to witness the exhilarating reunion of Ethiopia's Jews with their brethren. Although the homecoming of these 15,000 faithful people did deflect a bit from Teddy's fest, it is hard to conceive of a diversion more gratifying to someone whose whole life has been given to the Zionist dream. One of the last living literal founders of modern Israel, he began his career rescuing Jews from sure doom in Nazi-occupied Europe and smuggling them, and weapons too, across the now forgotten British blockades. I suspect that as Teddy welcomed the new arrivals who had been dispatched to Jerusalem, he also must have reflected on the fact that the lives of even the farthest dispersed and most despised Jewries now rested in the hands not of the great powers, but of a Jewish state.

SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE THAT the Jews have been in Ethiopia for 2,500 years; others won't hazard more than 1,300 years. Whichever it is, the survival of this isolated community with memory and vision intact can be nothing short of a miracle. There is another tradition that argues that these survivors hail from the lost tribe of Dan. An Israeli friend who'd gone to a remote village to assist in the great 500-mile trek to Addis Ababa was asked by one of the inhabitants, "Are you truly from Zion and Jerusalem?" This is the ancient vernacular for an equation both concrete and metaphoric. Those who are stirred by the mysterious ranking that counts Jerusalem as "the third holiest city of Islam"—which, by the way, is the fourth?—should conjure for a moment what it must mean to the Jews who've longed daily for their return, ever since the tenth Roman legion put it all to the torch. Place and people have been eternally enmeshed. Jews the world over pray for ample rain in the Holy Land. At their weddings, be they in Rio or Rome, Rabat or Rochester, they affirm that boys and girls will dance as bride and groom in the streets of Jerusalem. And when a Jew dies he knows that he will also be grieved by mourners in Zion. Each Passover during the centuries of exile, Jews yearn to be "next year in Jerusalem." And suddenly it is next year, and these African exiles are here.

WE'VE SEEN IN KURDISTAN AND in Bangladesh how much the world depends, for efficient and caring humanitarian operations, on its soldiers, and more precisely, on American soldiers. Of course, Israel sent its own reservists to Addis Ababa to help carry out the rescue operations. At the airport these young men gently carried the sick and the aged down from the planes to the ground. I asked one of them, who had borne an old and rather large woman to safety, whether she wasn't too heavy to shoulder alone. "No," he said, "not really. She is, after all, my sister." This could have been scripted from an old Hollies song, but, of course, it wasn't. It is the spontaneous poetry of human connection. This soldier was telling me that these people belonged to the Jewish nation, not less than someone born in Tel Aviv or Odessa. That's why Israel has always been willing to pay an exorbitant head tax to tyrants—like Ceausescu and Mengistu—who otherwise wouldn't let the Jews leave.

AS A GRADUATE STUDENT IN THE 1960s, I read much of the literature on nation-building, an enterprise in which most of the Third World states have failed so dismally. The literature seemed to me, then and now, to be slightly irrelevant to Israel. The country has its social cleavages, and will have more. But the underlying coherence of the Jewish nation can be safely assumed. Israel is not a nation in the process of becoming. It is an instance of a not uncommon case: the political expression of a people already formed, like Poland, Japan, or England. It is also, however, a unique case of a nation strewn across centuries and the world's four corners, having the different experiences and sharing in the different histories of their mostly inhospitable neighbors, speaking different languages, bringing down to the present different gene pools and different physical characteristics, yet one people. The restoration of the Leningrad physicist and the villager from Gundar to the land out of which their ancestors were driven are acts of a polity sure of its identity. This is why Zionism is a success and why, say, the Indian nation, and the Palestinian for that matter, are still social and political experiments of very uncertain outcomes.

ARTICLE 20 OF THE PALESTINIAN National Covenant states that the Jews are "not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own." Some Jews used to believe this, among them some American Jews. But the issue is now settled, even though the profile of the Jewish nation is constantly changing. At Teddy's birthday he was presented with flowers by five children, four of them born outside the land—in the Soviet Union, Albania, Iran, and Ethiopia. The fifth is a native of Jerusalem. These children were at least as palpably of one nation as would be kids from Harlem and Houston.

THE EMBRACE OF ETHIOPIA'S JEWS in Israel reminds the Palestinians of how little the other Arabs have treated them as brothers. Still, they are loath to grasp what this fraternity of the Jews portends for their own *folies de grandeur.* A sophisticated Arab merchant I know in Jerusalem asked why Israel, with 10 percent unemployment already and rising with every new Soviet immigrant, would burden itself, as he put it, with "so many primitives." This is a version of the old Arab folk wisdom, "A black face begins a black day." The merchant's brother, a cruder man, had a crude explanation: "They need these Africans to be able to do without Palestinians in humiliating jobs." People who comfort themselves by denying the elevated motives of their adversaries are self-deluders and self-deluded. But such motives are hard to imagine in a culture that prides itself on seeing the world as "my brother and I against my cousin; my cousin and I against the stranger."

MARTIN PERETZ

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